G. S. McCowley

THE LABOUR MONTHLY

A MAGAZINE OF INTERNATIONAL LABOUR

Editor : R. PALME DUTT

Volume 19 January, 1937 Number 1

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THE LABOUR MONTHLY

ALL-DAY NATIONAL DELEGATE

Discussion Conference

ON

THE PROBLEMS OF UNITY

AND THE PEOPLE'S FRONT

WILL TAKE PLACE

ON SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 14th, 1937

11 a.m. to 1 p.m., 2 p.m. to 6 p.m., in the

BATTERSEA TOWN HALL, Lavender Hill, S.W.11

(Buses 77, 77a, and Trams 26, 28 pass the door)

Chairman: R. PALME DUTT.

Opening Speakers:

Prof. HAROLD J. LASKI, G. D. H. COLE, HARRY ADAMS

(London Divisional Secretary, A.U.B.T.W.)

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NOTES OF THE MONTH

Which Way 1937?—Record of 1936—War Offensive's Advance—Fascist Penetration in Europe—Three Surrenders—Pan-America and Isolation—France and Spain—Soviet Constitution—Britain's Rule—Britain and France—"Pseudo-Neutrality"—German-Japanese Treaty—Theory of the "Two Blocs"—A Misleading Theory—Abstract Pacifism and Fascism—For War or for Peace—The Choice of 1937.

AT the opening of 1937 the question of war and peace dominates the minds of all. Not suddenly, but by a continuous progression since 1931, we are advancing into general war. There is no longer an abrupt dividing line as in 1914. It is a new world situation; and its very newness is creating a paralysis of confusion just when there should be the sharpest clearness of action. War has now reached Europe. What began as war in the Far East in 1931-2 (when we drew the deduction at the time in this journal that the first stage of the war-crisis had opened, arising out of the world economic crisis, and would continuously extend, unless a stand were made by the peoples, until it involved Europe and the world), has now gone forward stage by stage, through the establishment of the Nazi dictatorship in Central Europe in 1933 and the consequent new rearmament race and destruction of treaties, through the first attempted foreign coup of Fascism by Hitler in Austria in 1934, through the first open aggressive colonial war of Fascism by Mussolini in Africa in 1935, until we have now reached by 1936 the reality of war in Europe, of direct aggressive war by the two leading European Fascist Powers against a major European State to overthrow its Government, even though still in a preliminary half-veiled form, corresponding to the new conditions and technique. German and Italian armies have landed in Spain. The bombardment of Shanghai in 1932 has been answered by the bombardment of Madrid in 1936. The German-Japanese Pact, with Italian adhesion, openly expresses the war-challenge of Fascism to the world. Japan drives forward its invasion of China, arousing the united resistance

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of the Chinese people. Nazi Germany dominates or terrorises the smaller States of Europe, and turns its guns on Czechoslovakia. Yet there is still no effective mobilisation of the popular forces for peace to meet this menace. Millions still ask whether war is coming, when war is all around us. Amid universal apprehension, there is still universal impotence and confusion. There is still speculation on the hypothesis of a repetition of 1914, instead of facing the realities of 1937. There are still dreams of passive isolation escaping the storm of Fascism's war. On this basis Fascism advances year by year and month by month. A palace crisis can distract the attention of a nation, while Fascism lands its troops in a neighbouring State. *This blindness to the conflagration at our doors is the paradox and peril of our time.*

IT is only necessary to compare the situation at the beginning of 1936 with its close in order to recognise the accelerating pace of events. At the beginning of 1936 Laval still ruled in France. George V. was King in England, and the Baldwin Government had just emerged from the Hoare-Laval crisis by making a show of shedding Hoare. Spain was under Zamora and reaction. Locarno was still in force. Italy had not yet entered on the poison-gas path to the conquest of Abyssinia. Japan was still participating in the London Naval Conference. The changes of the succeeding twelve months are so great that the picture of the beginning of 1936 is like the picture of a vanished world.

WHAT has Fascism's advance shown in 1936? Five cardinal events stand out. In March Germany occupied the Rhineland and tore up Locarno. In May Italy occupied Addis Ababa and proclaimed the conquest of Abyssinia. In July Germany and Italy began their armed aggression on Spain, at first with the supply of tanks, bombing aeroplanes and pilots, while utilising Africans, foreign mercenaries and native reactionary officers for the fighting, then—as this proved insufficient against the united resistance of the Spanish people—by the direct dispatch of armies in December. In September the Nazi Nuremberg Congress proclaimed the war-crusade against Communism and Democracy; and Hitler's speech held out the prospect of rich spoils by the domination of the Ukraine, the Urals, and Siberia ("if we had at our disposal the incalculable wealth and stores of raw

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material of the Ural Mountains, the vast forests of Siberia and the unending fertile plains of the Ukraine to be exploited under National-Socialist leadership "—Hitler ; " Germany has given the signal for the world struggle "—Goebbels). In November, following fifteen months' negotiations between the military staffs the German-Japanese Pact—ostensibly for joint action against " Communism " both " at home and abroad "—was signed.

ALONGSIDE these five major acts of aggression and proclamations of aggressive aims may be set the doubling of military service in Germany in August ; the drawing over of Belgium, as shown in King Leopold's speech in October ; the establishment of control over Austria by the German-Austrian Agreement in July ; and the increasing penetration of the Balkans, especially Jugoslavia and Rumania (with the driving out of Titulescu) to break the Little Entente and isolate Czechoslovakia, together with the establishment of the Nazi-inspired Metaxas dictatorship in Greece. Nazi-Fascist domination or increasing influence has thus been built up through an extending range of Continental Europe from Algeciras to Helsingfors and from Brussels to Athens.

WHAT has been Democracy's reply to this enlarging offensive of Fascism ? Hitler's armed occupation of the Rhineland and tearing up of Locarno was received with acquiescence ; French proposals for counter-measures were overruled by Britain ; and Britain has devoted its diplomatic endeavours for the rest of the year to replacing Locarno by an isolationist Western European Treaty, as desired by Germany, which would exclude Eastern Europe, and would in particular—it is important to note—exclude Czechoslovakia, previously guaranteed under the old Locarno group of Treaties. Mussolini's conquest of Abyssinia in defiance of the League has been met by the retreat of the League and withdrawal of sanctions ; although the British-French endeavour to ratify Fascism's spoliation by hounding the Abyssinian delegates out of the League fell through against the opposition of the smaller States, led by the Soviet Union. The armed aggression of Hitler and Mussolini against Spain has been met by the brilliant British-French device (actually in origin British, but sponsored through France as catspaw) of " non-intervention," which—like the previous " equal " embargo on arms to Italy and Abyssinia that effectively disarmed the

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victim while his aggressor prepared—disarmed the Spanish Democratic Government and cut off support from the Democratic States, while the Fascist Powers freely armed the Fascist forces. Once again only the Soviet Union has made a stand on behalf of democracy, defence against aggression and collective peace. This over the three main conflicts of the year has been official Democracy's sorry record of complete and continuous capitulation before each new aggression of Fascism.

TO complete the picture the rôle of the United States of America should not be left out of account. At the Pan-American Conference at Buenos Aires President Roosevelt spoke of the close connection of the menace of war with Fascism even if he did not specifically name the enemy in so many words. He spoke of the necessity of strengthening democracy in order to strengthen peace, and of the menace of war arising from those States which had abandoned democratic processes, which "loudly proclaim that they require war as an instrument of their policy," and were building up their whole economy on the basis of colossal rearmament:

> We know that nations guilty of these follies inevitably face the day either when their weapons of destruction must be used against their neighbours, or when an unsound economy, like a house of cards, will fall apart.

The reference to Japan in the first place, and to Nazi Germany in the second place (whose penetration and even colonial designs in South America begin to be feared by the United States) is clear. But the practical conclusion to be drawn is less clear. The American aim was stated by the Chairman of the United States delegation, Cordell Hull, to be to "remove war from the Western hemisphere." Once again, as with Britain, the hope that all may be well so long as the Fascist expansion does not take place in "our" region.

CERTAINLY, there are big positive achievements on the side of the people's mobilisation and fight against fascism's offensive in 1936, even though these have not yet transformed the governmental policies in the democratic countries in Western Europe and America. The People's Front in France swept the elections of May, placed the Blum Government in power, forced through the dissolution of the fascist leagues (not yet by any means the end of the menace of fascism in France,

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but representing a heavy blow against fascism), and led the way to a torrential advance of working-class strength and organisation, as well as the winning of social and economic demands on a wide front. The Franco-Soviet Pact has been ratified in 1936, and still stands against the combined assault of Hitler and Baldwin. In the sphere of foreign policy the record of the Blum Government has failed the needs of the struggle, above all in relation to Spain ; but the key to this weakness lies in the overwhelming reactionary pressure of the British National Government. The People's Front in Spain swept the elections in February and placed a Left government in power ; and although that Left government failed to take adequate measures against the fascists before the rising, as urged by the Communists in repeated warnings, it was thanks to the People's Front that Spain has been able to show the world for the first time how a united people can fight and defeat fascism in a struggle, whose scale and significance exceeds every previous struggle in Europe since 1917.

ABOVE all, 1936 has shown in the new Soviet Constitution the realisation of socialism in the largest and most powerful State in the world. Consequent on the disappearance of the exploiting classes and of the old class distinctions, proletarian democracy has necessarily advanced still further into the universal democracy of a socialist society, into what is essentially classless democracy or real democracy for all. This advance and strengthening of democracy on the basis of socialism has taken place at the very same time as the capitalist world is revealing, not only the open attack of fascism on the whole basis of democracy, but the increasing restriction of democratic rights even in those countries which still retain the democratic forms. The whole fight for democracy against fascism has thus taken on a deeper meaning in present conditions, and become, in unity with the fight for peace, the key expression of the present stage of social struggle. In the same way the rôle of the Soviet Union in the fight for peace becomes more and more clearly to the widest sections in all countries the rôle of world leadership in the whole fight for liberty and civilisation against the assault of fascist barbarism. In the words of Stalin at the Soviet Congress :

> What has been achieved in the U.S.S.R. is fully possible of achievement in other countries also. From this it follows that the international significance of the new Constitution of the U.S.S.R. can hardly be exaggerated. To-day, when the turbid wave of fascism is bespattering

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the socialist movement of the working class and besmirching the democratic strivings of the best people in the civilised world, the new Constitution of the U.S.S.R. will be an indictment against fascism, declaring that socialism and democracy are invincible. The new Constitution of the U.S.S.R. will serve as moral assistance and real support to all those who are to-day fighting fascist barbarism.

BUT if we take stock of the world situation as a whole, we are compelled to recognise that it is in Britain throughout 1936 that we find the most serious weakness of the front against fascism in the democratic countries, and the consequent key to fascism's undoubted advance in 1936, despite the heroic struggle in Spain, the successes of the People's Front in France, and the triumphant strength of socialism in the Soviet Union. The National Government in Britain has succeeded in carrying out, and securing acceptance of, a policy which, under cover of supposedly peaceful aims of "neutrality," "impartiality," "non-intervention," etc., has in fact protected each step of fascist aggression, while strangling democratic resistance. The National Government has succeeded in carrying through this policy because of the absence of effective mobilisation of opposition to the National Government, because of the prevention so far of an inclusive united working-class front and popular front, because of the co-operation of the opposition leadership with the National Government at critical points (non-intervention, rearmament, constitutional crisis), because, in short, of the policy summed up in the Edinburgh Labour Party Conference. This has exercised a decisive and menacing influence on the international situation.

IT is no secret that the supposed Blum policy of "non-intervention" in Spain was in reality engineered by the National Government and forced on Blum. As one of the best informed foreign correspondents, Robert Dell, wrote in the New York *Nation* on October 31:

> After the visit of Leon Blum and Yvon Delbos to London in July, visitors to the Foreign Office were told: "We have never had to do with French Ministers so easy to deal with." . . . *It was during the visit to London that the British Government proposed the policy of "non-intervention" in Spain*—that is, the policy of intervention against the Spanish Government. Delbos was won over to it at once, but Blum was strongly opposed to it. Soon afterwards the British Ambassador in Paris informed Blum that if Germany attacked France because the Spanish Government obtained war material from France, the British

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> Government would not consider it an "unprovoked attack" within the meaning of the Treaty of Locarno and therefore would not go to the aid of France.

This has been subsequently confirmed by the publication of the official letter of De Los Rios, Spanish representative at Geneva, on July 25, reporting to the Spanish Government Blum's promise to dispatch war material ; the authenticity of this has not been contested by the French Foreign Office. In fact, we may criticise Blum as much as we will for his weakness. But the real criminal in the betrayal of democracy and peace to the open fascist aggression in Spain is the National Government ; and the heaviest responsibility in consequence rests on the Labour Movement in this country, which accepted this policy for three fateful months (actually in the name of helping and backing Blum ! what a height of hypocrisy !) and has since not fought against it.

IN the same way British policy in relation to Hitler, while consistently in public expression stressing the menace of Hitler's armaments and on this basis putting in the forefront the necessity of British rearmament, has no less consistently refused the line of general collective defence, which could alone check the menace of aggression, on the grounds that this would mean lining up with the democratic peace camp, in unity with the Soviet Union, against the reactionary camp, and that Britain must remain "neutral" from "both camps." Hence the reality of British policy concentrates increasingly on isolationist rearmament, Western European security and the maintenance of the Empire, while rejecting collective peace. This was the significance of Eden's speech at Leamington in November defining British commitments, and immediately echoed by Delbos in the French Chamber. The significance of Eden's speech was not merely that he stressed British commitments as being confined to Western Europe, the Empire, Egypt and Iraq, but that he no less specifically (and this point was immediately taken up by the fascist press) excluded any commitments under the Covenant of the League and declared them to be optional. The Conservative press begins to warn Czecho-Slovakia to make the best terms it can with Hitler. This is the policy of "pseudo-neutrality" which opens the way to fascist war.

THE German-Japanese Treaty is the inevitable consequence of this British "neutral" policy of surrender to fascism. In fact the German-Japanese Treaty—and herein is expressed the typical

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contradiction of the present British foreign policy—is far from pleasing to British official opinion. They see clearly enough that its point is not merely directed against the Soviet Union, but also against the extremely vulnerable British Empire. The *Times*, which had already written of the reported triple alliance of Germany, Japan and Italy as an alliance of " thieves " (thereby expressing the objections of the richest brigand to the fascist brigands' projects for the re-division of the spoils), affirmed that the German-Japanese Treaty contains secret clauses directed against British interests in the Far East :

> There are rumours, probably not without substance, that the agreement provides for the establishment of German and Japanese spheres of economic—ultimately political—influence in the Dutch East Indies ; a development which would certainly react upon our position at Hong Kong and Singapore. (November 26, 1936).

Similarly the *Economist* wrote of the reported Triple Alliance of Germany, Japan and Italy :

> This is one of the most significant events that has happened in the international arena since 1918. It may prove to be the nemesis for Anglo-French hesitation in the cause of collective security. It is obviously a piece of news which ought to be received with even greater concern in London than in Moscow.
>
> The easier option for a Triple Alliance is not Russia, but the British Empire ; for, unlike Russia, the British Empire lies strategically at the mercy of this particular combination. (November 21, 1936).

The dominant Conservative policy of " security " by isolationist rearmament and leaving Hitler a " free hand in the East " is getting into heavy straits.

IT will be seen that British Conservative foreign policy is increasingly torn with contradictions, and sharp conflicts of opposing sections and tendencies may be expected in the coming year. This situation offers unrivalled possibilities for a popular offensive for a positive peace policy in unity with the peace forces in France and other countries, and with the Soviet Union. Such an offensive, however, can only be conducted on the basis of implacable hostility against the National Government and its policy of " pseudo-neutrality," which in fact assists the path of fascist aggression and war. Herein lies the crux of the issue of foreign policy in Britain. Underlying the policy of " pseudo-neutrality " is the

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theory of the two blocs. Behind this theory is hidden the real support of fascism and war.

THE theory of the two blocs presents a picture of British policy as a policy of "neutrality" and "peace," seeing the menace of the world being divided into two "doctrinal" or "ideological" blocs of Fascism and Communism, and seeking to prevent Britain being lined up with either.

> As regards the attitude of His Majesty's Government, they have explicitly deprecated any tendency to divide the world into conflicting camps, especially on ideological grounds. (Eden, in the House of Commons, November 30, 1936).
>
> The refusal of this country to be drawn into any conflict of so-called "ideologies" is absolute. It has become necessary to repeat this refusal as Mr. Eden has repeated it because there is a persistent demand that this country should declare itself in favour of one or other of the "ideologies" that afflict mankind. ("Principles of British Foreign Policy," Diplomatic Correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian*, November 25, 1936).
>
> British foreign policy has been to prevent at all costs a line-up of fascist and anti-fascist States. (*Daily Herald*, November 26, 1936).

Under this guise the real foreign policy of the National Government is presented to popular opinion as a policy of "peace."

NOR is this only a question of the direct propaganda of the National Government, and of the official press from the *Times* to the *Daily Herald*. It receives additional support from pro-fascist and right wing conservative isolationism on the one side, and from sections of abstract pacifism on the other. How abstract pacifism, with whatever original intentions, turns into a positively reactionary force of support for the National Government's policy of so-called "neutrality" and for free play for the fascist war offensive, is abundantly illustrated from Bertrand Russell's recent book "Which Way to Peace?" Russell writes with at any rate a commendable explicitness which should open the eyes of many to the real character of abstract pacifism:

> The friend of peace in France should work against the Franco-Soviet alliance. The friend of peace in Great Britain should oppose commitments to Russia, and to France in so far as is possible without breach of faith. In America he should support the policy of neutrality. He should avoid the crusading spirit, as shown for example in relation to Abyssinia and Spain. (p. 192).

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> The Germans would like to be let alone while they attack Russia. . . . Perhaps after a successful campaign against Russia, the Germans would feel satisfied and grow less warlike. (p. 156).

No support for Abyssinia. No support for Spain. No unity with the Soviet Union. It will be seen that a single thread runs through all this policy of abstract pacifism. Absolute Pacifism has completed the circle and ended up on the side of fascism, the policy of Absolute War.

THE whole falsity of the theory of the two blocs is that it conceals and distorts the issue of peace or war into an issue of "two blocs." *But in fact there are not two blocs.* There is only one bloc—the war bloc of fascism. There is only one offensive—the offensive of fascism. This is the offensive of Germany, Italy and Japan, together with Franco and their satellites in all countries. It is this offensive which, through the tacit support of leading reactionary sections in the foremost imperialist countries, has in successive forms constituted the war-crisis since 1931 and now brings ever closer the menace of world war. Against this war menace it is necessary to combine the peoples of the world for peace. No such combination yet exists. If it did exist, the menace of war would be checked. There is here no question of a rival bloc, but of the defence of peace. The Franco-Soviet Pact or the Czechoslovak-Soviet Pact do not represent a rival bloc, because they are equally open to Germany to enter on the basis of the common maintenance of peace; and precisely this Nazi Germany refuses, thereby creating the division. For Britain then to take this division as an excuse for refusing to come out on the side of peace is not a policy of peace, but a policy of assisting fascist aggression and accelerating the advance of war.

WILL the popular forces throughout the world combine in time to check the offensive of fascism and its headlong advance to war? Above all, will unity of the working class and of the popular forces in Britain be achieved in time to defeat the reactionary policy of the National Government which in reality lies behind the advance of this offensive? These are the burning questions of the present moment, which are reaching their height in 1937. To present this issue as an abstract ultimate issue of "Communism or Fascism" is a trick of reaction at the present moment to prevent the united

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mobilisation of the popular forces. The present immediate issue over Europe, the issue that is being fought in Spain, is no ultimate issue of the future form of society or of final goals. These underlying social questions will have to be settled by the peoples in the future ; the immediate issue is more elementary, and is the condition of further advance. Anyone with eyes in his head can see that in hard fact the actual concrete struggle which is going on to-day is a struggle for peace and democratic institutions against the offensive of fascism. Only the enemies of peace, the reactionaries and pro-fascists, seek to conceal this issue, which concerns the entire working population of every country in the capitalist world to-day. On the success in mobilising all the popular forces for this struggle depends the outcome of the next stage before us. In this present struggle all the future is contained. And it is this struggle that is likely to reach its decisive height in 1937.

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THE UNITED FRONT—AND THE PEOPLE'S FRONT[1]

By G. D. H. COLE

I HAVE been taken to task for disloyalty for pointing out, in the *New Statesman* and elsewhere, that the Labour Party is by no means well on the way towards an independent majority in Parliament. Not many critics have ventured to suggest that my view is incorrect: they have rather said that it is calculated to discourage the party workers, and to make harder the winning of fresh recruits. So no doubt it is; but there are times when discouraging things have to be said, if the reasons for discouragement are to be tackled at the source. I believe it is so to-day; for the recognition that Labour is not near winning a majority of its own seems to me a governing factor in the framing of the right policy for dealing with our immediate problem.

If the Labour Party were at present advancing fast in public support and esteem, and nearing the achievement of a majority of its own in the country there would be much to be said in favour of the party avoiding all entangling alliances, whether with the Communists or with anyone else, and going right ahead with its own propaganda in the hope of speedily ousting the present Government and taking office in its place. Even so, it would be necessary to contemplate methods of propaganda and agitation that would bring about a change of Government long before the present Parliament's normal lease of life expires; for in the critical state of world affairs we cannot contemplate with equanimity leaving the existing Government undisturbed in office till 1940 or 1941. If Labour held a winning position in the minds of the electors it would be necessary to turn potential into actual victory by methods of mass-agitation which would make it impossible for the Tories to go on governing the country.

[1]This article together with J. A. Hobson's, immediately following, forms part of a discussion which was opened in the November issue by Professor Laski with his article "The Labour Party Conference at Edinburgh." This discussion series was continued in the December issue by H. N. Brailsford writing on "What next after Edinburgh," and also by Professor Laski who contributed under the title of "A Discussion on Edinburgh," a further article analysing the large number of letters—amounting to 163—which he had received in comment on his November contribution. Copies of both the November and December issues can be obtained from THE LABOUR MONTHLY, 7 John Street, London, W.C.1, at 7d. each post free, or at the specially reduced rate of 1s. post free for both. It should also be noted that G. D. H. Cole together with Professor Laski and also Harry Adams are the opening speakers at the LABOUR MONTHLY Discussion Conference which is being organised on the subject of "Problems of Unity and the People's Front" on February 14, further details of which will be found on the inside front cover of this issue.

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But everyone knows that the Labour Party does not at present hold the winning cards. Both the General Election of 1935 and the Municipal Elections of 1936 gave hard blows to Labour hopes ; and there is no sign of any change for the better. The Labour Party, despite the futilities of the Edinburgh Conference, is not perhaps losing ground ; but it is not gaining either. If there were another General Election now the Conservatives and their " National " allies would again come back with a very large majority.

What then ought we to do—those of us I mean who realise that the entire cause of the workers in Europe may be saved, or wrecked for a long time to come, by the events of the immediate future ? We cannot stand by and watch one country after another being over-run by Fascist aggression without lifting a hand to help. Least of all can we stand idle, when we realise that Great Britain could, if her rulers would, stop this aggression and pass the initiative in Europe over from Fascism to the forces of democratic advance. France and the Soviet Union cannot act effectively in Western Europe without British help ; and no democratic league of pooled security is possible without British participation.

It is however quite futile to hope, as apparently some of the Labour and Trade Union leaders do hope, that Great Britain under a right-wing Government of capitalist-imperialists will come in on the side of European democracy. To do so would be to deny all their own beliefs ; for the British capitalists, even if they are afraid of Hitler, are far more hostile to Socialism of any sort than to Fascism. They would do their best to make Britain Fascist to-morrow if Fascism were necessary for the protection of their property and their right to continue exploiting the workers at home and abroad. How can they come in on the side of Spain or Czechoslovakia or any other democratic State when the result will be to ally them with Russia and very likely to bring about the triumph of Socialism all over Europe ?

This is not to say that our rulers positively want to support either Hitler or Mussolini. They do not. They dislike Fascist aggression because it threatens the British Empire and British trading and financial interests in many parts of the world. They would be far happier if Fascism would stay quietly bottled up within its existing frontiers and not trouble their peace. They are even prepared to check German or Italian aggression where they can do so without any risk either of war or of committing themselves to any sort of alliance with, or help to, the forces making for Socialism. But this means that they cannot check the Fascist Powers ; for without the help of Socialism they are not strong enough to say no to any demand that Hitler or Mussolini chooses to make and to insist upon. Accordingly, Fascism gets its way, except when it is checked, as in Spain, by heroic working-class resistance

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against desperate odds. And in Spain, though the British Government would have been better pleased if the Fascist Powers had not stirred up the rebellion, now that it has been stirred up, British Conservatism would far sooner see Franco win than Caballero—even though a rebel victory would plant Fascism firmly in command of the Western Mediterranean.

In fact, even with our imperialists, the Empire comes second, and the rights of property come first. That being so, it is futile to expect that the National Government, if we give it armaments, will use them on the right side. What it will do is to follow a policy of armed isolation while Fascism does its best to devastate Europe, and then try to come to terms with the Fascist victors for preserving as much of the British Empire as it can.

To anyone who believes in the international solidarity of Labour, such a policy is surely intolerable. We must not merely protest against it, but act to stop it by every means at our command. But we shall assuredly not stop it merely by continuing the ordinary propagandist work of the Labour Party, in the hope that gradually the persuasive tongues of the Labour leaders may win over a majority of the electors to vote Labour, and in course of time place a Labour Government in power.

Such a policy would be futile and beside the point, even if Labour propaganda were a hundred times more effective than it is. It is doubly futile, when Labour propagandists cannot make up their minds what they want to say—when some of them are for giving full support to the rearmament programme of the present Government, without even an attempt to exact guarantees about the policy which these armaments are to serve, when at the other extreme one influential Labour group is preaching absolute pacifism and unilateral disarmament in face of the Fascist menace, and another talking in a futile way about " working-class sanctions " and the need for avoiding all entanglements with persons or groups that are not prepared to go the whole Socialist hog.

In the present state of world affairs we need not a self-righteous minority of Socialist Simon Pures, isolating itself from all contaminating contacts, but a *majority* for the anti-Fascist cause. But a majority consisting entirely of class-conscious Socialists is wholly beyond our reach, within the limits of time within which we are compelled to work. Accordingly, we have to seek allies outside the Socialist ranks, and to be ready to collaborate, in the emergency, with *anyone* who is prepared to join us on the basis of an immediate policy that will serve our need.

In this immediate policy, what matters most is a right line in foreign affairs. The essential thing is to gather a majority behind a programme of pooled security, based on a League of Britain, France and the Soviet Union, with such other countries as are prepared to come in, for united resistance to Fascist aggression. This means, in effect, extending the Franco-Soviet Pact to include Great Britain, and then using it as a basis

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for reorganising the League of Nations into a real League, with pooled armed forces and a common determination to settle disputes on principles of international justice, and to bring about close collaboration between Socialist and democratic countries as a means to making their "united front" a social, and not a merely military, combination.

In comparison with this one essential article, the rest of our immediate policy matters little *in itself*. But it matters a great deal from the standpoint of winning popular support. We must combine with our international programme a domestic programme which will rally behind us all the forces in Great Britain which broadly stand for progress, even if many of those who join us have in our opinion no real understanding of the nature of the social and economic forces which are at work, or of the changes which progress is bound speedily to involve.

The case can be put in this way. If the Labour Party won a clear parliamentary majority, and if, in addition, the most forward elements in the party were in a position to dictate its economic and social policy, how much could it hope by constitutional means to accomplish in five years of office? Let us try to answer that question realistically, and not in a fantastic or Utopian way; and then let us ask ourselves whether there are not, outside the ranks of the Labour Movement, a great many persons, including many Liberals and many who now vote National, ready to support as much social advance as such a Labour Government could be expected to achieve. Then let us frame a domestic programme including just as much as we think such a Government could actually accomplish, add that programme to our declaration of policy, and go forward with it on a crusade to win a majority to our side and turn the Government out. The result will not, of course, be Socialism, or any great advance towards it; but it may well be to save us from Fascism, and to place the means of getting Socialism firmly in our hands.

This amounts to an appeal for a People's Front, such as exists and supports the Blum Government in France. But it is often urged, by those who support my general attitude, that the first step towards such a combination must be the achievement of working-class unity, and that only when working-class unity has been achieved can we safely proceed to appeal for any sort of non-Socialist, or non-Labour, support. I dissent from this view. I have been consistently in favour of working-class unity: I profoundly deplore and condemn the Edinburgh decision to refuse the Communist affiliation; and I propose to act in the spirit of the United Front of the working class whatever my official leaders say. But I entirely refuse to postpone working for a wider People's Front until the United Front has been secured.

Why? Simply because there is no time to be lost if we are to swing Great Britain over to the democratic side in the great world conflict that is already being fought out in Spain. We cannot afford, while we are

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trying to get working-class unity, to leave the waverers to be captured by the other side. Moreover, I believe that the way to get a United Front of the workers is to confront the official Labour Party with a movement in the country too powerful and spirited for them to resist, and that such a movement—or call it a crusade—can be most easily created by a wide appeal to rally to the side of democracy, and not by a narrower campaign for the United Front. Of course, we must go on demanding the United Front, but let us set to work to build up the People's Front, not subsequently, but at the same time.

I am not thinking at all, at this stage, of electoral arrangements. That is not the point ; for no election is at present imminent. What I want is a crusade to sweep in all the people who have been working together in countless local organisations that have sprung up for peace, for Spanish democratic defence or medical aid, for personal or intellectual liberty, for making the League of Nations a reality, or for any other cause that fits in with our immediate programme. I want to get in Nonconformists from the local Councils of Action, Liberals and Tories from the next Five Years' Group, and all sorts of people from Youth movements, religious movements, social movements of every type and variety. I do not care what these people's political past has been, or to what party, if any, they now belong. I want them in, if they will come in on the basis of a simple, but clear, immediate programme.

Yet I agree utterly with those who maintain that it is impossible to advance towards Socialism by a mere acretion of social reforms, and that as capitalism decays it becomes harder and harder to exact even moderate reforms from it. I agree that we shall not advance towards Socialism without a frontal attack on the key positions of capitalism, and that such an attack will be resisted by capitalism with all its strength. But I do not agree that there is anything disingenuous in holding this view, and yet appealing to people who do not hold it to rally to the defence of world democracy. I am fully prepared to combine with non-Socialists who believe themselves to be on the democratic side in the present crisis. I feel sure that, if they start working with us on our immediate programme, most of them will be prepared to go much further when the time comes, and to accept the necessity of a Socialist solution. As for those who do not come over to Socialism in due course, we can deal with them—just as they hope to deal with us—when we have succeeded together in beating back the Fascist danger.

I want, then, for the present a crusade in every locality both for the United, and for the People's, Front. That, of course, involves that the People's Front, if it stretches beyond Socialism towards the right, shall stretch also to the extreme left. No People's Front is any use if it excludes Communists, any more than if it excludes Tories or Liberals.

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For the present, we have in our several localities to seize all the chances we can get of creating People's Fronts, under any names and forms that suit local circumstances, with very little central help or co-ordination. The national People's Front can come only when local success forces it upon the national leaders, or throws up new and more energetic leaders to take their place.

As for the programme on which we should work, I suggest seven points :

1. A League of Pooled Security, open to all, but based on a Franco-Soviet-British Pact of Mutual Assistance.
2. A reformed League of Nations, arising out of the Pact, and pledged to the redress of legitimate national grievances, and to the positive promotion of international economic collaboration between the League countries.
3. Abolition of the Family Means Test, the provision of employment in the distressed areas, and a policy of increased production in order to raise the standards of living and improve the nutrition and housing of the people.
4. Extension of civil and personal liberties, including the repeal of recent repressive legislation, and the suppression of Fascist armed forces, and of all incitement to violence, and therewith democratisation of the armed forces and of police control.
5. Public control, extending where necessary to full public ownership, of arms manufacture, and of all industries and services essential to the people's standard of life.
6. The institution of the Second Ballot.
7. (For Socialists only.) Democratisation of the Labour Party machine, and the creation of a United Front of the British working class, and therewith an effort to recreate a united working-class International.

Have You Made Sure that your organisation will be represented at the Labour Monthly Conference in February

(*See inside front Cover for full details.*)

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THE ECONOMICS FOR A PEOPLE'S FRONT

By J. A. HOBSON

NO strong People's Front in this country, as a contribution to an international People's Front, is an immediate or an early possibility, if it implies the adoption of a complete communist or socialist policy. No quick education under able leadership would bring the British electorate to any wholesale and immediate overthrow of capitalism, however desirable such a course may be. The people of this country by a "free" vote placed in power and office the present "Capitalist" Government. The electors may have been deluded into doing so. But would any rapid unity of Left forces prevent them from being deluded again? Even if our Labour Party were solid in its opposition to rearmament, have we any surety that a present appeal to the country upon this issue would lead to the Government's defeat?

I put these disagreeabilities in the forefront of my discussion because I feel sure that the effective overthrow of Capitalism, necessary for a peaceable and prosperous world, demands a tactic adapted to the history and present circumstances of each country. This is not a mere endorsement of the "inevitability of gradualness," for in social as in biological evolution there is a place for "mutations," by which slow quantitative changes are suddenly transformed into qualitative ones. But can we count upon such a revolution in our political and economic system? That a collapse of Capitalism in accordance with the Marxian prediction, is taking place, there can be no doubt. Industrial Capitalism, productive and highly profitable so long as it was confined to a few countries, has now extended to so many that it ceases to be fully productive, and its profitability has passed to financial groups which organise industrial combinations, with "sabotage" of production and price-fixing. This means lengthening periods of waste and under-employment, not only for labour but for plant, power, raw materials, and the increasing inability to utilise all productive factors by reason of an insufficiency of markets due to a failure of the consuming power of the workers to keep pace with the increase of productive powers. This, it may be said, must bring about a new industrial revolution in which the worker-citizens should displace the bourgeois-citizens who ruled under capitalism. Yes, this seems the plain logic of such a situation. But plain logic does not rule our lives, nor can any swift educational or propagandist effort make it. I shall not here dwell upon the traditional supports of economic and social

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class distinctions in the popular mind or the supports given to capitalism by academic economists and interested business groups. But I would raise some questions as to the " plain logic " of wholesale socialism and communism as remedies applicable to the disease. The fundamental questions are two. Is it desirable to bring the whole economic life of a people under a state-planned or a soviet system, in order to eliminate profiteering and unearned income, and to utilise fully for the people's good all factors of production ? What are the forms of government best fitted to control the social relations of worker-consumer citizens in a progressive society where the economic needs of life will play a diminishing part ?

It is natural that a People's Front, in which organised workers take a most prominent, or even dominant part, should look chiefly or exclusively to the liquidation of profiteering Capitalism and should support the idea of a worker-citizens control of all economic processes. This, however, suggests that Trade Unionists, who are not a majority of the citizen-voters, or even of the employed classes, should rule the Labour policy and the other issues domestic or foreign which come into the art of government. Now it is notorious that neither by education, selection or view-point, are they well suited for this wide and varied work. The Trade Union Movement and most of its leaders are not primarily, or by deep conviction, Socialist. They are out for better conditions in the industry whose local branch they represent. They are trained bargainers, skilful organisers, with some feeling for the solidarity of labour, but little understanding of the practical problems of state socialism or of international relations. Recent events, indeed, have made manifest the defects of a Labour Movement in which the block votes of Trade Unions are the determinant voice.

But this narrowness of Trade Unionism does not fully account for the over-stress laid by socialists and communists upon the production side of the economic system and the excessive devotion to one side of social progress. Even if all the workers with hand and brain were brought into common action, that would not suffice. Production is almost entirely a means to consumption, and the needs and desires of consumers are not adequately guaranteed by organising their producer interests. Consumer interests are of vital importance in working out problems of industrial organisation. So far as consumers are identical in their needs and standards of life, the supply of the goods they require can be standardised and socialised in their production processes. This is the vital support for the socialization of all fundamental and routine production.

But when consumers develop individual or special needs and tastes, the processes which supply them require some corresponding freedom

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of production and supply. The fine arts are the most obvious example. But the finishing process in many ordinary goods needs attention to the personal tastes or fits of individual consumers, demands personal skill and adaptability in the worker, and defies the economy of the machine. These considerations justify the retention of some elements of private personal initiative and enterprise in a planned economic system.

Standards of consumption require socialised production, unstandardised consumption does not. May there not be some danger in a social order where organised labour rules, or has the upper hand, of attempts to force standards of conformity upon consumers, thus cancelling their individuality. Representation of the Co-operative Movement would not suffice to meet the demand, because its activities are almost wholly devoted to standardised needs and goods. The adequate representation of the consumer's interests can only be supplied by their action as citizens, in local groups, where as individuals, families and neighbourhoods they can make their voices known.

But, of course, citizens are not only producer-consumers: they have many interests which lie outside the economic field. There are, therefore, right limits to the economic control of politics, however liberally interpreted. The State, as instrument for social order and social progress, cannot be made all-powerful, as Fascism seeks to make it. It must leave large liberty to individuals and groups, social, religious, intellectual, moral, recreational and others, to pursue ends and employ means in which the economic and political factors have only a subservient place. Indeed, the success of any general system of economic planning, along socialist or communist lines, would be best appraised by the diminishing time, effort and attention, needed for the distinctively economic activities, and the larger proportion of leisure and energy afforded for individual activities in non-economic fields. It is of the utmost importance for the supporters of a socialist-communist policy to keep in the forefront of their movement this claim to enlarge the scope of personal liberty, both in the economic field, by attention to free craftsmanship, and by enlarging the scope for free non-economic activities in all higher spheres of personal and group life.

Two other vexed issues in any People's Front policy I must here name, though I have no space to argue them. One relates to the immediate liquidation of profits by the "taking over" of all capital without compensation. Anyone who remembers the effectiveness of the "scare" about Post Office Savings in the election of 1931 will realise the potency of the weapon given to Capitalism by any proposal to touch the two thousand millions of capital values accredited to the working classes. Though the savings of the rich involve no such "thrift" or "sacrifice," it would not be easy, possible, or desirable, to apply without allowance for life

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interests any wholesale removal of all personal profit from a socialised system. It would not be a practicable policy of any Labour or United Front Government. My last qualification is more disputable. Until " human nature " has received sufficient education to evolve the necessary *corps d'esprit*, it may be desirable to leave private enterprise free to undertake the risks and take the early profits of trying out the latest products of scientific research, or of speculative businesses for the discovery and supply of new wants. Publicly provided research may not suffice for all important paths of progress, and the needed private initiative may require the offer of prizes or profits.

I may appear to overstress the doubts and difficulties of full socialism. But if any early attainment of a Popular Front, applicable to governmental functions, is sought, it must ask: " What are the enlargements of State and Municipal enterprise, the further developments of social services, the increased taxation of unearned incomes, which, taken in conjunction, will undermine the sources and results of profiteering, distribute the real income of the nation more favourably to the worker-consumers, and lay the foundations upon which the fuller socialism of the future may build ? "

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THE PROBLEM OF THE DISTRESSED AREAS

By WAL HANNINGTON

THE 1936 National Hunger March has again brought the problem of the Distressed Areas into the forefront of the political arena. Following the very effective case which was presented by the marchers' deputation to the Minister of Labour in the House of Commons on Thursday, November 12, the Government has come under a continuous fire of criticism in respect to its failure to do anything effective for these Distressed Areas.

A considerable number of Tory members of Parliament, particularly those from industrial constituencies, have been shaken by the march and are pressing the Government hard for a plan of action.

In the House of Commons on December 8 the Government was compelled to agree that before the 31st May, 1937, it would introduce a new Bill to take the place of the present inadequate Special Areas Act. Lord Wolmer, speaking for the group of dissatisfied Tories, said :

> " They were convinced that the problem could not be solved by merely patching up and continuing the present Act. . . . We want," he declared, " new legislation which must be on bolder and broader lines, embodying suggestions made by Mr. Malcom Stewart, the Commissioner for England and Wales. If the Government does not rise to the occasion in the Spring, it will find the whole House of Commons against it."

Even Miss Megan Lloyd George contributed to the criticisms by saying it was the timidity of the Government that shocked them—" the Government was not doing things by halves, but by millimetres."

It was the great National March of January and February, 1934, which first compelled the Baldwin Government to take special steps in connection with the Distressed Areas. In the House of Commons on the 19th April, 1934, the Minister of Labour announced that the Government had decided to conduct enquiries into the problem of the derelict areas. Four representatives were appointed to carry out the preliminary enquiry. They were—for Durham, Captain D. Euan Wallace, M.C., M.P. ; for South Wales, Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Wyndham Portal, D.S.O., M.V.O. ; for Cumberland, the Right Hon. J. C. C. Davidson, C.H., C.B., M.P., and for Scotland, Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Arthur Rose, D.S.O. Their reports were published in October, 1934, following upon which the Government introduced a Bill entitled " The Depressed Areas Bill."

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It became an Act of Parliament on 13 December, 1934. Under this Act Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Arthur Rose was appointed as Special Commissioner for Scotland, and Mr. Malcolm Stewart as Special Commissioner for England and Wales. The principal points in the terms of reference under which these Commissioners were appointed were "*to initiate, organise, prosecute and assist measures designed for the economic development and social improvement of the Depressed Areas.*"

It is interesting to note that the Government no longer refers to these areas as "Depressed," "Distressed" or "Derelict" areas. It now employs the euphemistic term "Special Areas."

A Long-Term Policy!

In the Second Report of Mr. Malcolm Stewart, which was published in February, 1936, he makes the astonishing statement that "*no spectacular results must be expected.*" "*The Special Areas Act does not make provision for expenditure on schemes primarily intended to give immediate employment.*" He expresses the opinion that the terms of reference upon which he was appointed imply a long-term policy. It seems that the term is a little too long; even Lord Wolmer and his friends are becoming disturbed about the complacency of the Government.

The areas which roughly constitute the Special Areas under the Act are—West Cumberland, Durham, Tyneside, South Wales and Monmouthshire, Lanarkshire, Dumbartonshire, Stirlingshire and Ayrshire. The total population covered by these areas is roughly 2,800,000 in England and Wales, and nearly 1,000,000 in Scotland. In September, 1936, the total number of registered unemployed in the Special Areas of England and Wales was 282,952, and in Scotland over 80,000.

A very large proportion of these workers have been unemployed for more than five years, in some cases there has been continuous unemployment for ten years. It is not within the scope of this article for me to deal with the terrible condition of distress that prevails amongst the workers and their families in these areas that are classified as "Special Areas" except to say that in the last four years since the operation of the Means Test, we have had a series of startling reports from medical officers of health concerning the way in which unemployment and poverty has undermined the physical standards, caused epidemics of disease (especially amongst children), and created startling contrasts in the rate of infant mortality, as compared with more prosperous areas. The alarming reports that were issued last year by Sir John Boyd-Orr and Dr. M'Gonigle will be well-known to most students of social conditions.

The plain fact is that in these Special Areas we have whole communities sinking into conditions of appalling distress. In the case of South Wales one can almost say that a whole nation has been driven into acute suffering

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through consistent privation. It says much for their character and strong working-class qualities that under such conditions they have still yet avoided the worst forms of demoralisation—as is shown by the fact that they have played such a fighting part in the great demonstrations and marches against the U.A.B. regulations. They are, in bitter truth, actually fighting to live.

The Tragedy of the Youth

One of the most terrible aspects of the Distressed Areas is the way in which the lives of the youth are being destroyed. They grow up under conditions of extreme poverty, they are handicapped in their education by lack of nourishment, and then, when they leave school, there is no prospect in life for them—no chance of learning a trade, no opportunity of helping their parents, no prospect of happy marriage.

It is not surprising that Mr. Malcolm Stewart in his Final Report speaks of a rapidly falling birth-rate in the Distressed Areas. He gives figures to show that the birth rate in 1935 had fallen to 14.7 per thousand, as compared with 22.4 per thousand in 1921. Mr. Malcom Stewart says :

> These young men present, in my view, the most tragic aspect of the problem of the Special Areas and one fraught with great danger to the State.

An example of the way in which the health of the youth is being undermined by the conditions of unemployment and poverty is revealed in the British Army Council Report for 1935. This says that out of 80,203 young men and lads who offered themselves as recruits to the British Army 54,639 were rejected chiefly on the grounds of being physically unfit. Only 25,564 were able to pass the medical test. Mr. Duff Cooper, the Secretary for War, is now proposing that in order to secure more recruits for the Army, the physical standard tests shall be further lowered, and that an extensive system of physical training should be carried out amongst the youth who are unemployed. This " brass-hat " is apparently incapable of seeing that it is not physical training that these lads want to make them fit, but food and the useful occupation of their time.

Many of these lads have been reduced to such a low physical condition that they cannot even stand up to a course of training in the Ministry of Labour Instructional Centres. The following statement in the Second Report of Mr. Malcolm Stewart bears this out. He says :

> I have been much impressed by data obtained regarding the low medical standard of boys and young men in the Special Areas. The percentage of rejections on medical grounds for the Juvenile Transfer Centres and for the men's Instructional Centres is alarmingly high.

There can be no doubt that the most urgent need in regard to the Distressed Areas is that special provision shall be made by Government

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grants for food and clothing and household utensils for the vast masses of men, women and children who have been reduced to the very minimum in regard to these necessities of life. I regard this as the first step which the Government should be compelled to take in dealing with these areas.

Plans for the development of work schemes and industrial transference, which are recommended in the reports of the Distressed Areas Commissioners, are problems which are not likely to be tackled with any real effect for some time to come, and only then under pressure of intense working-class activity, whilst the immediate needs of life demand immediate action.

Capitalists Confess to a Bankruptcy of Ideas

Mr. Malcolm Stewart, in presenting his Third Report, has handed in his resignation as Commissioner for the Distressed Areas, and it is difficult to disassociate this resignation from the fact that the Baldwin Government has pursued a deliberate policy of blocking all effective proposals which have been made for providing employment for the Distressed Areas. Numerous recommendations for work schemes have been advanced, but the Government has steadily resisted their operation. The ruling-class in general has shown their utter incompetence to tackle this problem of the Distressed Areas which has been produced out of their own system.

In this respect some figures given by Mr. Malcolm Stewart in his Second Report are of interest. He states that when he first took up his labours as Special Commissioner he approached the Federation of British Industries and asked for their assistance in circularising employers of labour outside of the Special Areas. These "Captains of Industry" were asked for suggestions as to how the Special Areas could be revived and whether they would assist in establishing new industry, or a branch of their business in one of these areas. Mr. Malcolm Stewart says "*the completion and return of the questionnaire entailed no expense and involved a minimum of labour.*" Yet in spite of this, out of a total of 5,829 employers, who were written to, 4,066 ignored the correspondence. There were 1,763 who did reply, but only 64 gave useful ideas and favourable answers to the questions submitted. 1,313 gave unqualified negative replies to all questions and 386 gave qualified negative replies to all questions. Out of the 64 who answered favourably, only 38 were ready to offer concrete assistance in the establishment of new works or branches in the Special Areas.

Could there be any more damning reflection upon the British ruling class than these figures reveal? First, nearly four-fifths of them are not even sufficiently interested to answer correspondence in connection with the Distressed Areas, although a stamped addressed envelope is enclosed, whilst the remainder—with the exception of 38—have no useful propositions to offer.

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It is not surprising that Mr. Malcolm Stewart became disheartened and wrote :

> I regret the lack of interest in the Special Areas shown by the large majority who made no response . . . . it must be assumed that there is little prospect of the Special Areas being assisted by the spontaneous action of industrialists now allocated outside the areas. The results of the enquiry are disappointing but help to confirm the feeling generally prevailing that industrialists in the main are indifferent to the Special Areas.

Disgraceful Treatment of Severn Bridge Scheme

In regard to the question of establishing industries or branches of industries in South Wales, the Commissioner has been informed by a number of employers that their objection to this is the inaccessibility of South Wales. Now right from the very moment when Mr. Malcolm Stewart took up his office as Commissioner, he urged the construction of a road bridge over the River Severn, in order to open up South Wales to heavy motor and tourist traffic, and to provide an alternative approach for the existing unsatisfactory routes through the counties of Gloucester and Monmouthshire.

Such a bridge would save for road traffic over fifty miles and would meet the argument of those employers who argue the point of inaccessibility. The carrying through of such a project would have meant giving employment to a large number of men as well as opening up a direct route into South Wales.

The proposition was submitted to the Ministry of Transport ; they agreed to offer local authorities a grant of 75 per cent. towards the cost of such a project, not exceeding £2,480,000. The proposal was to construct the bridge at a site known as English Stones. The Government referred the proposition to the Select Committee of the House of Commons. The Select Committee considered the matter and rejected the proposition. Mr. Malcolm Stewart then appealed to the Government for the matter to be further discussed and for the whole scheme to be resubmitted to Parliament, and for it to be carried through as a measure of first-rate importance for the industrial development of South Wales. No progress has, however, been made !

The reader may ask in bewilderment why such a proposition is turned down if the Government is anxious to help the Distressed Areas. The answer is that a bridge over the Severn River interferes with vested interests. At present the railway companies have a monopoly in regard to transport from England into Wales through the Severn Tunnel, and apparently because they see that their monopoly would be broken if a main road bridge was constructed, they use their influence against the proposal, and the Government bows before vested interests.

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This is not conjecture on my part for it is made clear in the statement of Mr. Malcolm Stewart himself, when he says :

> I have been assured by several leading industrialists in South Wales that they are whole-heartedly in favour of the scheme, but unfortunately vested railway interests and some important coal owners maintain their opposition.

So it is with any proposition to provide work for the unemployed that interferes with vested interests, and it is clear that the fight for rescuing the Distressed Areas means a fight against the National Government and big capitalism.

Reservoirs of Cheap Labour

One thing stands out very plain in respect to the work of the Distressed Areas Commissioners in the last two years, namely, that these Commissioners can spend their time preparing reports in order to make the people believe that the Government is considering tackling the problem—but the Government has no serious intention of really acting upon the proposals contained in these reports to the benefit of the unemployed. The Baldwin Government has constantly pursued a policy of blocking every effective proposal for work schemes at trade union rates for the Distressed Areas. It allows its Commissioners to spend a few thousand pounds on the development of social service centres and on " work without wages " schemes, but on the main question of providing the populations of the Distressed Areas with opportunities of again earning their own livelihood in their own areas, the Government does next to nothing.

I firmly believe that the Government is pursuing a deliberate policy of allowing the people in these areas to sink into deeper distress in the hope that they will constitute a reservoir of cheap labour.

Young men in particular are being encouraged by the Ministry of Labour to leave their home towns and villages and to go into the more " prosperous " areas for work. Amongst building workers in London to-day one hears unfriendly criticism towards young men from Durham and South Wales. Many of these young men have been unemployed ever since they left school. They know nothing about trade unionism from actual experience, although their fathers have been amongst perhaps the best trade unionists in the British movement. These young men get a mere smattering of training in Ministry of Labour Instructional Centres and are then encouraged to strike out in new areas. Building workers in London bitterly complain about such men coming to London and taking jobs below established trade union rates, and so we see division developed in working-class ranks.

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Of course, we can at no time condone the working of men under the trade union rate, but if the trade union movement wishes to protect itself against this sort of thing then it must direct its campaign not only against the unfortunate individual who has been made the victim of circumstances, but against the problem of the Distressed Areas itself, which the Government is deliberately making a source of cheap labour. The trade union movement has to do more than express sympathy for the victims of the Depressed Areas. To protect the standards of the workers in other parts of the country it is necessary for the trade union movement to demand immediate effective action by the Government, and to really commence an intensive campaign against the present obstructionist policy of the Government.

The whole working-class movement should demand that the various work schemes recommended in the Final Report of Mr. Malcolm Stewart shall be accepted by the Government and men put to work on these schemes at full trade union rates of wages. Amongst some of the proposals made in this respect are the following :

1. Financial assistance by the Government for the erection of plants for the extraction of oil from coal.
2. Installation of a factory in South Wales for the production of calcium carbide.
3. Encouragement in the use of Welsh smokeless coal for domestic purposes.
4. The prevention of Maryport Harbour from becoming closed and derelict.
5. A bridge over the Severn River with a main arterial road into South Wales.
6. To open up West Cumberland for industrial development and tourist traffic, by the construction of a main arterial road.
7. Improvement of communications between the North and South banks of the Tyne, east of Newcastle.
8. The establishment of a National Park on modern lines in South Wales.

(*To be continued.*)

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THE L.C.C. ELECTIONS

By G. R. STRAUSS, M.P., L.C.C.

IN 1934 the Labour Party was returned to power at County Hall in a wave of popular indignation against the indiscriminate and ruthless economies introduced by the Municipal Reform Party. The housing record of the Tories was ridiculously inadequate, bearing no relation to the actual slum and overcrowding position of London. Their administration of Public Assistance was brutal and inhuman, and responsible for undernourishment in tens of thousands of homes. Their petty economies had even gone so far as to abolish all school prizes. In the three years of its rule, Labour has removed these grievances, and, as far as lay within its power, it has immensely improved the standard of the social services. But gratitude is unfortunately a less powerful force in politics than disgust and indignation. If the great housing drive is to continue, if Public Assistance is not to revert to its former inhumanity, if the Hospitals are to be maintained decently and fully equipped, if, in a word, London is to be saved from a Government with more sympathy for the pockets of the wealthy than the welfare of the working man, then the London Labour Movement will have to rise to unprecedented efforts in this, the hardest and most critical fight of its history.

The first necessity for the achievement of victory is that the people of London should understand the importance of the issues at stake. The second is that the socialist forces should be inspired to use all their latent strength and energy in the election campaign. To this end our movement must work with united zeal. The stimulating effect of vigorous co-operation between members of the Labour Party and of all other progressive bodies, loyally given and loyally accepted all over London, would be a decisive guarantee of victory.

It must be evident to all socialists that the coming election is not the concern of the London workers alone. It is vitally important for the whole country. The continued existence of the National Government constitutes a terrible danger to peace and democracy in every part of the world, and to the progress of humanity itself. That needs no emphasis here. There is only one thing that can remove this standing threat to the lives and welfare of all workers, and that is a united and all powerful working-class movement. The fate of the Labour L.C.C. cannot fail to have a very deep effect on the development of this movement in England, and consequently on our prospects of overthrowing the National Government, with all the hope and encouragement that this will bring to the peoples of the world. It is this which gives to the March election a

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significance far beyond its local interest. For it thereby becomes an international event of major importance. Political events in England to-day are followed with unparalleled intensity all over the world, and the re-election of Labour to the Government of England's capital will be a much needed stimulus to the socialist forces of Europe and a definite setback to Fascism.

The struggle against the Government, which faces the working class in England to-day, demands the determined spirit that comes from confidence in itself. It is a tragedy that in this situation the Labour movement should still be suffering from the disintegrating effect of the Edinburgh Conference. Up and down the country, local sections of the movement are still struggling to shake off the atrophy that prevents them from rousing the great democratic instincts of the people for the ideals that Labour stands for.

The heroes of these local struggles are awaiting only some striking and encouraging success. One resounding triumph for working-class unity will go far to galvanise their sporadic endeavours into a single all-powerful movement. If such a triumph can be achieved in London, the focal point of British life, it will have the widest and most dramatic effect. Here is a unique chance to strike an immediate and effective blow for peace, democracy and humanity.

If all the working-class parties are prepared, as presumably they are, to rally behind the Labour Party at the next election, then inevitably a practical unity will arise out of comradeship in the heat of the struggle. Indeed, in view of the strength of the forces against us, of the vast financial resources of our opponents, and, judging from past experience, of the unscrupulousness of their campaign, the Labour Party simply cannot afford to turn away the proffered help of any friend. If that co-operation is offered early, and cordial working arrangements are established in each division, then it will not be impossible that unity will result not only in a Labour victory, but in an increased Labour majority. Few things could encourage international socialism more than this, and such an achievement would make an unanswerable argument for the unity of the working-class of this country.

In contrast to the wider aspects of a Labour victory at the London County Council elections, the record of the Labour majority over the last three years must naturally seem rather matter-of-fact. But nevertheless, within the limits imposed by the Local Government system under capitalism, they are remarkable.

The Council's most striking success has undoubtedly been their housing achievements. They have declared their aim to be nothing less than to clear every slum in London. It is, of course, impossible to do so in three years, and the party at no time held out any false hopes that

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they would do this. But from the moment they were returned to power they bent their energies to the great housing crusade. A few figures are worth recording. The number of slum houses demolished was in 1933-4, 440, and in 1935-6, 2,003. Further, in 1933-4, the number of new flats built was only 884, but by 1935-6 it had risen to 2,750, and at present the Council is building at a weekly rate equivalent to 5,668 a year. It is true that over a long period the Municipal Reformers built a large number of dwellings. But they were nearly all outside the county, and consequently of no practical use to most families living in slum houses or in overcrowded conditions. The Labour Party have concentrated on the much more difficult task of building dwellings in or near the centre of London, where they are of infinitely greater value in rehousing the working class.

The tempo of housing construction is still rising sharply. It was impossible to produce more than a comparatively small number of houses in the first year, owing to a number of insurmountable difficulties. Municipal Reform economy had reduced the number of experts in the architects department from 900 to 600, and it is much easier to disband a good staff than to bring one together again. The number has now been increased to 1,300. Moreover, apart from the insufficiency of personnel, the whole machinery of the housing department had to be drastically overhauled before it was capable of tackling any large-scale developments. Even more troublesome are the series of delays permitted by the existing housing legislation. Objectors to a housing scheme, and particularly private owners anxious to squeeze the maximum compensation out of the public purse, are able to, and often do, hold up the Council no less than eighteen months between the issue of a compulsory purchase order and the date when building can begin. In spite of these difficulties very great progress has been made. No description of the housing work of the Council would be complete without mention of the drastic reductions of rents in all its London dwellings, and the many new amenities that it has introduced in the standard plans of all the dwellings it erects.

In the administration of Public Assistance, Labour's achievements are less spectacular, but none the less important. The abuses of the previous administration have been removed, and, in conformity with the pledges we made in 1934, the lot of the man on the P.A.C. has been substantially improved. In the first year there was an immediate and considerable increase in the amounts paid in out relief, due largely to the additional number of applicants accepted. But at the same time the Labour Party has strenuously sought to bring about a change of spirit in Public Assistance administration by removing the petty tyrannies to which the applicants were previously submitted, and treating them with the respect and sympathy due to honest citizens. Many improvements have been carried

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out to humanise the system. The establishment of a hostel for old men at Clapham, where they can spend their last days free from the shadow of the workhouse, is an example. A similar hostel for women has recently been agreed to. Another decision worthy of note is the closing down of one of the worst old workhouses, and the transfer of the site to the housing committee for the erection of working-class dwellings.

There has been criticism from some quarters that the Council has maintained Belmont and the other instructional centres outside London. But the Labour Party has held firmly to the view, in which I fully concur, that these centres, in giving opportunity for people to learn farming or some other trade, are rendering a considerable social service. The Council has, however, drastically changed both the physical conditions and the spirit of administration in these places, particularly in Belmont. It no longer sends married men to them, except in very special cases, and one of its first acts was to return over 300 of these men to their families. It has also reduced the hours of attendance at non-residential centres in London from 30 to 20 per week, in order to leave all the mornings free for seeking work.

Another alteration made by the Council, which in my view is thoroughly desirable, has also been the subject of criticism. In order to do away with the necessity for every applicant to appear before a sub-committee, thereby wasting a good deal of time both for himself and the committee, the Council drew up and published a complete scale of relief for the normal case. Under Conservative administration there had been no such scale which could be publicly discussed and criticised, although it was well known that there had been a secret and much lower one. The Labour Council also appointed an adjudicator, a paid and highly responsible official, to each area, whose duty it is to see each applicant for relief. Any departure from the scale has to be reported to the committee, and any applicant who feels aggrieved with the decision of the adjudicating officer can also appeal direct to the committee. Thus much unnecessary and tiresome work is avoided, the position of the applicant is safeguarded and the principle of an open scale of relief established.

To sum up the work of the Public Assistance Committee, I cannot do better than cite my personal experience. Before 1934 I was overwhelmed with pitiful and bitter complaints in my constituency. Now I seldom receive any, and when I do, they are more in the nature of requests for information.

But it is by no means only in these two aspects of the Council's work that we have pursued a working-class policy. We have refused to look on education as merely the process of turning children into wage-earning machines. A number of important improvements in the educational service have been made. New schools have been built, and existing

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ones overhauled. The school staff has been increased, and scholarships far more generously provided. Special attention has been given to the health of the London school children. They are now measured and weighed twice a year, and there has been an immense expansion in the arrangements for their medical treatment. Furthermore, steps have been taken to free education from all taint of military training. Cadet Corps are no longer authorised in the schools under the Council's control, and no school organisation may be used for getting children to military displays, which disguise the beastliness of war.

Similarly, the Hospital service has undergone considerable reform. The Poor Law spirit has been driven from them, and as a result they are much more used by working-class and middle-class people who dreaded the taint previously associated with them. The number of persons admitted has risen from 155,000 to 175,000 in four years. In the same period the number of out-patients has risen from 385,000 to 652,000, the number of massage treatments from 352,000 to 544,000, and the number of operations from 27,000 to 37,000. The number of maternity cases has risen by 50 per cent.

In the first two-and-a-half years of office, the Council has agreed to enlarge modernise, or otherwise improve 37 separate hospitals. A major decision was to make the treatment for tuberculosis a free service in London. A number of petty and irritating economies have been swept away, as, for example, the rule that ambulances would only be used for the free conveyance of maternity cases to hospitals at night.

Perhaps I will be pardoned if, as chairman of the Highways Committee, I refer to the work of that department. I would not write about the action of the Council in regard to Waterloo Bridge were it not for the remarkable public response to our decisions in this matter all over the country. I find that reference to the Bridge is greeted with acclamation by Labour audiences everywhere. The reason is, I think, that it has a symbolical significance. After ten years of delay, involving an unnecessary expenditure of over £100,000, in which decision followed counter decision, Waterloo Bridge had almost become a standing criticism of democratic government. The significance lay in the speed and determination with which the Council swept away a structure which age had rendered unfit for modern conditions, and decided to replace it with one, which will not only be adequate for both present-day and future needs, but which will also be beautiful to look at.

Besides Waterloo Bridge, the Council has also decided to reconstruct Wandsworth Bridge, to carry out the Vauxhall Cross improvement scheme, to extend Cromwell Road into a new trunk road westwards, to widen Notting Hill Gate and to carry out many other major traffic schemes at an expenditure of several million pounds. It also embarked

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on a comprehensive scheme of London improvement when it agreed to acquire for the purpose of re-development as a planned unity the property on the South Bank of the river between Waterloo and Westminster Bridges.

Lack of space prevents me writing as much as I would have liked about the many other activities of the Council, and the changes it has effected in the Mental Hospitals, in the running of the Fire Brigade, and in the Care of the Blind. On this latter service, the total expenditure has increased under Labour control from £95,000 to about £170,000. The success of the Parks Committee in acquiring new open spaces, and, in particular, in securing a Green Belt round London of nearly 30,000 acres would alone have justified Labour control of the Council.

One of the many difficult problems that the Council has had to face is the application of the many unions having members in the Council's service for improvements in wages and hours. As soon as Labour was elected, these applications poured into County Hall. It immediately became apparent that if they were all to be granted, the additional rate burden would be tremendous, and would, moreover, prevent the party from carrying out its schemes for the greater welfare of London as a whole. It was therefore essential to strike some sort of balance. The applications of the unions were dealt with in order of merit. Some were granted in full, some in part, and some not at all. This did not mean that the Council necessarily considered the demands unreasonable, but merely that during the first term of office it was impolitic to improve the conditions of the Council's employees to such an extent as to jeopardise the fulfilment of the party's promises in wider spheres. The total cost of the improvements in staff conditions effected by the Labour Council is, however, considerable, amounting to over £300,000 per annum. A substantial part of the cost is accounted for by the reduction of hours and a consequent increase in staff. In the hospitals, for example, the hours of the nurses have been reduced from 60-70 to 54 a week, and that of the administrative and subordinate staff to 96 hours a fortnight. It is the Labour Party's intention to make further improvements during their second term of office.

The Council recently introduced changes in all its standard clauses for contractors which will be of immense benefit to the Trade Union movement. Amongst other new conditions which will be imposed in the future is the requirement that there should be no discouragement or prohibition of Trade Unionism, and that Trade Union conditions must be observed not only in the actual work which is being carried out for the Council, but over the whole field of the contractors' activities.

Sufficient has been said to make it clear that the Labour record is one that can, and, indeed, must rouse the whole-hearted support of every member of the working class and inspire everyone who has human progress at heart to work for its continuance.

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Almost without exception, the Labour Party has carried out its election promises. It promised nothing that it was not able to accomplish. The one exception was the establishment of a Municipal Bank, which was found to be impracticable in the existing financial circumstances. Socialists, however, should always bear in mind the limitations under which Local Government work is carried on under the present social system. Municipal authorities are only permitted to act within the powers specifically given to them by Parliament. They are thereby prohibited from carrying out many activities which they consider desirable, and, above all, their finances have one limited source. All expenditure undertaken by a local authority is born by the ratepayers, rich and poor. Those in control of a Labour local authority are bound to consider how much the ratepayers can afford to pay, and how much they are prepared to pay willingly. This is a fundamental problem of every local progressive authority throughout the kingdom. The present L.C.C. has increased the rates by 1s. 2d., and, as the rates of most of the Metropolitan Boroughs have also increased, the additional burden on the ratepayer has been marked. It must be remembered that this increase is felt not merely by the wealthy, but by almost every working-class family in London. There has inevitably been some complaint at this increase, and there would have been much more if the Labour Party had not justified the rate by the full value they gave for the money, and brought this home by constant propaganda.

A pamphlet[1] issued by the London District of the Communist Party contains an ideal programme for the Government of London, and is to be distributed, I understand, during the coming election campaign. Its plan is based on the raising of over £40 million a year that is not now available. £14 million is to come from a sequestration of the profits now enjoyed by the Transport, Gas, Electricity, Milk and Coal industries. £12 million is to be London's share of the saving effected by reducing armaments by 50 per cent., and £10 million will be derived from an additional municipal Supertax. I hope that those who read this pamphlet will realise that its programme is only capable of achievement after the defeat of the National Government and the realisation of far-reaching changes on a national scale.

By the time these words are in print, the battle will have started, and will proceed with increasing vehemence, until the Polling Day on March 4. I beg every London reader of the LABOUR MONTHLY to do his utmost during the ensuing weeks by working, preferably in direct contact with his local Labour Party, to achieve a great Labour victory. The issues at stake are tremendous. Let us show the world what the London working class, co-operating for a united purpose, can accomplish.

[1] *New London*, by Ted Bramley. pp. 59. 2d.

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ORGANISING THE CLOTHING TRADES

By BERNARD SULLIVAN

(*Secretary, London Central Branch, Tailors' and Garment Workers' Union*).

MR. J. R. SCOTT, the Organiser of the A.E.U., gave[1] a very detailed analysis of the growth of industry in the outer belt of London. The Garment making industry comprising high-class tailoring, multiple, bespoke and ready-made garments, shirts, collars and ties, hats, caps and millinery, dressmaking, corsets, furs, mantles and costumes, overalls and waterproofs, is mainly confined to an area spreading out from Whitechapel fanwise to Edmonton in the North and to Bermondsey and Southwark in the South-East.

There are 160,000 of these workers employed in this area with a very few scattered light clothing factories on the West side. All these trades with the exception of waterproofs are covered by Trade Boards, with regulated hours of employment, overtime pay, hourly or piece-rate time rates, and in many instances receive some form of holiday pay. In these industries the sexes are divided as follows: 120,000 females and 40,000 males. Of these, the average of children under 16 years is not more than 10 per cent., and 80 per cent. of these are girls. This latter amount is not very high when one remembers that the industrial life of a woman is very short, but it is significant that the number of male entrants is declining. *It is obvious that the securing of a minimum rate and conditions does not make Trade Unionists.*

Trade Board inspectors are appointed to enforce the rates, and £10,000 per year arrears of wages is secured throughout the country through the Trade Board machinery. In addition the Union enforces the rates when evasions are reported by members or other Union members. The number of inspections of firms is about 10 per cent. per annum, therefore if sufficient inspectors were appointed to visit all the firms each year the amount of money recovered would be considerably higher. Most of the evasions occur in small firms. As the penalty for paying below Trade Board rates is usually the payment of arrears without prosecution of the offenders, many firms risk being found out. Trade Board regulations have made the workers satisfied with their conditions, and increase the difficulties of the Trade Union organisers to build up a strong Union in the area.

[1]In his article "Greater London's Industries—A Problem for Trade Unionism" in the December issue of the LABOUR MONTHLY, 7d. post free from 7 John Street, W.C.1.

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Membership is very weak in the factories, and very strong in the cutting rooms where men are almost exclusively employed. Trade Unionism has proved beneficial to the cutters who are the workers who perform the first process in the making of a garment.

When reductions in wages took place in all industries in the slump period of 1932 and 1933 the cutters in the organised factories were able to retain their old rates. Trade Boards only protect the basic rates as wages are considerably higher where Trade Union organisation prevails. The lighter clothing, shirt and collars, dresses and costume cutters are less well organised, the latter being almost unorganised. Here, cheap female labour is found even in the processes claimed to be men's work, and men's rates tend to fall to the minimum. These facts should help the organisers to build up the membership in the unorganised trades, but there are many snags. Shirt and collar workers have their benevolent clubs. Ladies' tailors and helmet workers have their local Unions, and a recent attempt was made to form an organisation of waterproof workers.

National Unions have taken in workers in the light clothing trades and tailors in public bodies and clothing workers attached to big stores, adding to the confusion. Most of the smaller organisations only enrol the key men and seldom bother about the lower paid workers in the warehouse or the women workers.

Employers are prepared to give privileged conditions to a few if they are allowed to exploit the many.

We have seen that guaranteed conditions exist up to a point in the garment factories. These conditions are lacking in the industries referred to by Mr. Scott in the outer areas. *The obtaining or absence of guaranteed wages and conditions does not affect Trade Union organisation.*

We must look elsewhere for the cause and remedies for non-unionism. Trade Unionism in the North is a tradition and membership of our Union is much stronger in towns outside of London. London is vast and lacks the personality of a Yorkshire or Lancashire town. The workers have attractions and amusements denied to the people of the bleaker towns and villages where Trade Unionism is strong. Men who have organised the workers in the districts where Trade Unions are flourishing live close to their workshops and therefore their methods of personal approach to non-unionists are unsuitable to London with its dormitory boroughs.

For some years the Trades Councils of London have been pressed to adopt a newer type of organisation. The London Trades Council has a scheme whereby the Councils can be assisted to maintain full-time officers who could help to perfect organisation in the areas. These organisers would be of infinite value in the Outer Belt where Trades

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Councils do not exist. The greatest opponents of this scheme are members of organisations labelled "advanced," who prefer the petti-fogging methods of some of the local Trades Councils that spend very little of their income on organising work, but fritter their energies away doing work that should be left to a central organisation. *The job of the Trades Councils should be to assist the branches of the Trade Unions to perfect their organisation in the local workshops.*

The Co-operative Societies are large indirect employers of labour. Their buyers often lack the co-operative ideals and buy where the goods are cheapest. If the co-operative societies decided to insist on Trade Union organisation where they place their contracts, the Trade Union Movement would receive a big influx of members from that source.

If all Borough Councils and Public Authorities could be persuaded, as many already are, to invite tenders from a list of Trade Union firms supplied by the Trade Unions or Trades Councils, a further source of membership would have been tapped. Trade Unionists buy goods without considering the conditions under which they are made.

Trade Union journals publish advertisements of non-union firms. Civil Servants' and Blackcoat journals have arrangements with big stores to supply their members with goods at a special discount, and generally the conditions of the workers who make the goods or serve the customers are not satisfactory to the Unions. In America an influential committee drew up a White List of firms supplying consumable goods which proved effective in keeping up the standard of the workers. The boycott is very effective in inducing firms to employ Trade Union labour. A very large Chain Store has instructed its buyers to deal only with Trade Union firms. This is a more advanced action than has been secured from the Co-operative Movement.

Trade Unions hamper their organisers by their faith that the methods that built up the movement in the provinces should prove successful in London. If modern machinery and organisation is good for the employer it should not be despised by Trade Unions. I have been using a Radio Van regularly for the past two years and find the workers more ready to listen than when I borrowed a chair and spoke outside factory gates. A couple of records played before the meeting brings the workers out or they sit at the windows of the workshop keenly following the speakers' argument, and a general discussion continues through the rest of the day inside the factory. So, the education of the worker in the need for organisation has begun. Rank and file executives feel that an official who has a car has entered the ranks of the capitalists and it is very difficult to persuade the Unions to supply cars to the organisers who frequently travel 20 to 30 miles in buses and trains in a day.

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The youth in our movement can help. I had an interesting experiment last year when the Stoke Newington League of Youth members stood outside a large clothing factory daily distributing Union leaflets and wearing placards advocating the Union organisation.

The Garment industry in London has grown into larger units. A few years ago there were no factories employing more than 600 workers. To-day factories employ thousands. Burton's of Leeds employ 10,000 and are building factories in other areas. In spite of this growth there are between 5,000 and 6,000 factories and workshops in the Garment industry in London.

Trade Union organisation has created greater efficiency and employers who could not run their firms on cheap labour have developed a technique in factory organisation that has enabled them to produce their goods in greater quantities. The elimination of waste, and scientific organisation in the modern factory has superseded the system of long hours and low wages in the sweatshop. *Where Trade Unionism is weak the factory organisation of the firm is usually very poor.*

In such factories sports clubs are formed, inevitable forerunners of the Company Union. Unlike Mr. Scott, I distrust the Sports Club and find that it is just as likely to alienate our good workers as to assist in the organisation of the workers.

The closed shop is one of the powerful weapons of Trade Unionism. It prevents the lapsing of membership that otherwise occurs when a member leaves the firm where he joined up. The closed shop can even operate amongst a section of workers if carried out in a number of factories. It is not necessary to wait for the whole firm to be organised. The particular section should seek to organise all workers employed on a particular skilled operation.

For instance, the cutters in the tailoring section have almost eliminated non-unionism from their department. They insist on seeing a man's Union card before he starts work and so give preference to Trade Union members. This is a great privilege that most Trade Unionists appreciate. That section is very useful in forming the nucleus of organisation of the factory, although they tend to become conservative, fighting only for the section's interest. In spite of their weakness I put the closed shop or section as my first and best method of organising. My second line is the reorganisation of Trades Councils where the local atmosphere that exists in the North can be created in the London area.

The education of the parents of that huge mass of uninterested girls can be done by the Trades Councils, in conjunction with the local Labour Parties and Co-operative Guilds.

The Central Trades Council and London Labour Party could direct the White List campaign through the local bodies, but without a more

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perfect local organisation we would be merely passing ineffective resolutions. The local Trades Council could watch the Borough contracts and even keep an eye on the goods sold in the co-operative store. Without a full-time area officer the Trades Councils are not of much assistance to the Trade Union organiser.

The most modern appliances at the command of the Union organiser and freedom to experiment even if it cuts across old Trade Union customs brings the Union in close touch with the workers who are ready to help a local drive for membership. The Trade Union Movement should grow upwards and outwards to link with other organisations that could be of assistance.

Any improved method of consolidating the movement and simplifying the task of organising would mean the scrapping of many conservative ideas, and the taking of risks by the militants who at times show signs of rigidity that proves fatal to the growth and development of the movement. Given the will, plus the machine, Trade Union officials with the co-operation of the active organised members can do for London Trade Unionism what the London Labour Party has done for the political movement, and the very successful Co-operative Societies have done in their sphere, viz., make London solid for Trade Unionism.

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THE NEW SOVIET CONSTITUTION

By P. A. SLOAN

I.

ON November 25th, 1936, there assembled 2,016 delegates in Moscow. This was the Eighth All-Union Congress of Soviets, called to discuss and adopt a new Constitution for the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Why, some may ask, was a new Constitution necessary? Is this a departure from the essential principles of the Soviet State as previously adopted? Is it a fact that the U.S.S.R. has started, after 19 years of the Revolution, to ape the features of bourgeois democracy? Is the U.S.S.R. trying to become respectable in the eyes of the world? Or is all this fuss just a sort of propaganda drive, in which nothing is really being altered at all?

In order to answer these questions it is necessary to know something of the historical development of the Russian Soviets, from their very origin up to the present time. Only then can the significance of the new Constitution be fully understood.

II.

The first "Soviet" was formed in the year 1905 in the textile town of Ivanovo-Vosnesensk. This "Soviet" was a Council of delegates, elected by the workers in all the factories of that town, to make the employers bargain collectively. As the revolution of 1905 spread over Russia similar Councils were set up in practically every industrial town; and whereas the first one had concerned itself only with collective bargaining, others took upon themselves the work of municipal government, passed decrees in the interests of the working people, and actually became an organ of local government. But the revolutionary outbursts of 1905 were scattered, and the revolution was suppressed.

In February, 1917, when mass dissatisfaction with the Tzarist government reached a critical point, the Tsar was forced to abdicate. A "Provisional government" was set up by the employing class—backed by the Allies, and once again, as in 1905, the workers throughout Russia set up Soviets, to defend their interests against the employers. In Petrograd the power of the Soviet was so great that it passed decrees, and was able to force the government to support these decrees. Soviets were also formed in the army, and in the villages.

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In November, 1917, when the sharpening struggle of classes in the Russian Revolution had reached such a point that it became increasingly clear that the choice lay between complete power for the Soviets or complete power for the counter-revolution, with the suppression of the Soviets, the Bolshevik Party, having won the support of the majority of the workers in the Soviets, led an armed uprising against the government, and on November 7 the Second Congress of Soviets declared that henceforth the Executive Committee which it elected, together with "People's Commissars"—heads of State departments responsible to that Committee—should be the Government of the country.

A workers' organisation, embracing the whole rank and file of the population—workers, peasants and soldiers—had set itself up as the State.

At the Third Congress of Soviets, held in January, 1918, a *Declaration of Rights of the Labouring and Exploited Masses* was adopted, which referred to the "fundamental aim" of the Soviet State as "abolishing for ever the division of society into classes, of ruthlessly suppressing all exploiters, of bringing about the Socialist organisation of society." A number of measures were adopted as a first step towards the achievement of this aim. Among other things, it was pointed out that "now, at the decisive moment in the struggle between the workers and their exploiters, there can be no place for the latter on any organ of government." Such legislation seems strange—if we contemplate the Soviet State from the point of view of the capitalist class; but if we contemplate it from the point of view of the working people, who have built up the Soviets as their own fighting organisation *against* the employing classes; then the deprivation of the employers of political rights in the Soviet State was no more unreasonable than the refusal of Trade Unionists in Britain to-day to allow the employers any rights of participation in their work.

It is precisely this fact—that the Soviet State was itself an organisation of the *Working People Against the Employing Class* that made it different from every previous kind of State. It was this fact which characterised it as the *Dictatorship of the Working Class;* which at the same time, was a *Democracy* for the working class such as they had never previously experienced.

Thus, at the Fifth All-Russian Congress of Soviets, in July, 1918, when the first Constitution of the Russian Soviet Republic was adopted, *universal suffrage* at the age of 18 and upwards was provided for all working citizens, and those who, by their domestic work enabled others to do socially useful labour, irrespective of sex or nationality. On the other hand, exploiters of labour were deprived of the right to vote.

The disfranchisement of the employing classes, however, would not be a permanent feature of the Soviet State—because the employing classes

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themselves would not be a permanent feature. Thus, in his speech to the 8th All-Union Congress, Stalin quotes Lenin as writing, as early as 1919, the following words :

> With each day of the consolidation of Socialism and the reduction of the number of those who have an objective possibility to remain exploiters or to preserve capitalist relations, the percentage of disfranchised people decreased by itself. It is doubtful whether this percentage in Russia at present exceeds two or three. On the other hand, in the very near future, the cessation of the foreign invasion and the completion of the expropriation of the expropriators, may, under certain conditions, create a situation when the proletarian state power will choose other means of suppressing the resistance of the exploiters and introduce universal suffrage *without any limitations*.

III.

From the setting up of the Soviet State in 1917 till the end of 1921 the new Soviet government was having to fight for its very existence against the armed intervention of the capitalist world.

By 1922 the Soviet Republics were free of the invaders and the world was now divided into two camps. The Soviet Republics decided to unite their forces. For, as the Treaty of Union put it, " Only in the camp of the Soviets, and under the proletarian dictatorship round which is rallied the majority of the population, has it been found possible to root out national persecution, to create conditions for mutual trust, and to lay the foundations of fraternal co-operation." The ravages of the civil war and the danger of new attacks make united action essential to the rebuilding of the national economy, and of the defence of the country. " Finally, the very structure of the Soviet power, which is international in its class character, urges the working masses of the Soviet Republics along the path of union into one Socialist family."

A multi-national State was to be set up. " The Soviet power," says Stalin in his speech to the 8th All-Union Congress, " could not fail to see the difficulties of that task. It had before it the unsuccessful experiments of multi-national states in bourgeois countries. . . . Nevertheless, it undertook an experiment of establishing a multi-national state for it knew that a multi-national state emerging on the basis of socialism must go through all and every kind of test."

The Treaty of Union was ratified by the First All-Union Congress of Soviets in 1922. In 1924, the second All-Union Congress adopted the Constitution of the U.S.S.R.

The most important feature of this Constitution is the way in which it provided, not only equality for all working citizens, irrespective of sex, religion, or nationality ; but equality of nations. In each national Republic the supreme authority was the Congress of Soviets, and, between Congresses, an Executive Committee elected at that Congress.

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But in the Constitution of the Union a modification was introduced: the Central Executive Committee was to consist of two councils—with absolutely equal powers in every respect. These were the *Council of the Union* and the *Council of Nationalities*. (This fact, incidentally, exposes all the ignorant chatter which has been pouring forth from the capitalist press about the two chambers in the New Constitution being an innovation—usually with the suggestion that they are an "upper and lower" house, and that Mr. Stalin had decided to copy the admirable British method of government.)

The Council of the Union was directly elected by the Congress of Soviets. As there was an absolute majority of Russians in the Union, so, too, in the Congress; and so, too, in the Council of the Union. But, to safeguard the interests of the smaller *nations* of the Union, the Council of Nationalities was set up, consisting of representatives of all the national republics—equally represented. Thus, since no law could be passed without a majority in *both* Councils, no law could be passed by a Russian majority against the will of a majority of the nations of the Union in the Council of Nationalities.

This was the Soviet solution of the colonial problems, for all the smaller nationalities had been colonial and semi-colonial peoples before the Revolution.

IV.

In 1924 there was still 20 per cent. of industry under capitalist control. In agriculture a large part of the total production came from the farms of the small capitalist farmers—the kulaks. Some 40 to 50 per cent. of the total trade of the country was carried on by capitalist traders.

During the past three years, however, from 1933 onwards, it can be said that capitalism has been wiped out throughout the U.S.S.R. Industry, agriculture and trade are now practically entirely in the hands of the State or co-operative organisations of producers and consumers. No longer, then, is there the exploitation of man by man. In general, the Socialist system has been made universal.

Therefore, the "fundamental aim" of the Constitution of 1917 has been achieved. The special measures to ensure the supremacy of the working people over the exploiters have become no longer necessary. The facts of present-day Soviet life make the assumptions underlying the old Constitutions out of date. It is for this reason that, at the 7th All-Union Congress of Soviets, the Communist Party proposed that the Constitution should be revised and brought up to date. And the new Constitution of 1936 is simply a new statement of the Fundamental Law of the U.S.S.R. in the light of the actual achievements which have been realised. Whereas, the *aims* of the Soviet State were the keynote of

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the Constitution of 1918, the *achievements* are the keynote of the new Constitution of 1936. Thus, replying to those foreign critics who have called the new Constitution an " empty promise," Stalin says :

> In 1917 the peoples of the U.S.S.R. overthrew the bourgeoisie and established the dictatorship of the proletariat, established Soviet Power. This is a fact and not a promise.
>
> Then, Soviet power abolished the class of landlords and handed over to the peasants more than 375 million acres of former landlords' state and monastery lands, and this over and above the lands which were also previously in the hands of the peasants. This is a fact and not a promise.
>
> Then, Soviet power expropriated the class of capitalists, took away from them the banks, factories, railways and other implements and means of production, declared them Socialist property and placed at the head of these enterprises the best men of the working class. This is a fact and not a promise.
>
> Then, having organised industry and agriculture on new, Socialist lines, with a new technical base, Soviet power achieved this, that agriculture in the U.S.S.R. now turns out 1.5 times as much produce as in pre-war times, industry is producing seven times as much as in pre-war times, and the national income has grown four-fold as compared with pre-war times. All these are facts, and not promises.
>
> Then the Soviet power eliminated unemployment, brought into effect the right to work, the right to rest, the right to education, guaranteed better material, and cultural, conditions to the workers, peasants, and intelligentsia, guaranteed the carrying into effect of the universal direct and equal electoral right with secret ballot. All these are facts and not promises.

V.

We have already shown how the Soviet State was set up as an *organisation of the working people.* Universal suffrage was granted to the working people from the age of 18 upwards. But the employing class had no political rights. Those rights which, under capitalism, are taken for granted : the right of the rich to own the press and the meeting halls, to finance the election campaigns of their candidates out of their vast resources, and so on ; these rights were challenged by the Soviet State in its earliest months. Thus, in the Constitution of 1918 we read : " To ensure for the workers effective liberty of opinion, the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic puts an end to the dependence of the Press upon capital ; transfers to the working class and the peasants all the technical and material resources necessary for the publication of newspapers, pamphlets, books and other printed matter ; and guarantees their unobstructed circulation throughout the country."

To-day, in the U.S.S.R. wages are not equal. Each receives " according to his work." But the person who earns more cannot obtain power over others economically, by becoming an employer of labour ; and he cannot

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obtain power over others politically, since all the means of political propaganda are in the hands of the working people themselves through their organisations ; and it is these organisations too, which put up candidates at elections. There are no property or residential qualifications for the enjoyment of the franchise in the U.S.S.R.

Thus, the Constitution of the U.S.S.R. guarantees real democracy to the people, as contrasted with the capitalist state, in which real democracy is enjoyed to an overwhelming extent by the property-owners, whether through formal rights accorded to property, or through the indirect rights of property—such as the power to carry on widespread press propaganda and so on.

VI.

We are told by certain observers that the new Soviet Constitution cannot give real democracy, because there is only one political party in the U.S.S.R. There are three important points which must be realised in this connection.

First, assuming that, in any country of the world, a Party which represents the working people of the country achieves power, is it in the interests of the working people, the vast majority of the population, that it should remain in power or that it should be thrown out again ? Obviously, from the point of view of the working people of every country, to have in power a Party which represents their, the majority, interests in the population, is highly desirable—and, because they are the majority of the population, also highly democratic. It is undemocratic when, owing to the private ownership of the means of effective propaganda, the parties of minorities can, by demagogy, get themselves into power. and it is this latter situation which is typical of capitalism.

Secondly, the value of a " Party system " is greatly exaggerated. It is not customary, in working-class organisations such as trade unions or co-operatives, to claim that a " Party system " is essential to democracy. On the contrary, in any society of people with common interests, elections consist in getting the right people to the right jobs and no more. It is only when a community is split by fundamentally opposing interests that elections take on a " Party " character, and this is typical only of the capitalist parliamentary state among the democratic institutions of the world. A State that is set up by the working people in their common interests should no more be expected to include a " Party system " than a Trade Union, organised by the workers in their common interests, should be expected to include " Parties." Such a conception of the State is based purely on the existence of capitalism.

Third, it is important to emphasise that the Communist Party of the U.S.S.R. is no parliamentary party—but, as the Constitution puts it,

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" is the vanguard of the toilers in their struggle for strengthening and developing the socialist system and which represents the leading nucleus of all organisations of the toilers, both public and state."

What guarantee is there that the Communist Party contains the really best elements among the working people? The guarantee is the fact that, in the U.S.S.R., every three or four years, there takes place what are known as " Party Cleansings." Sir Walter Citrine describes one of these as follows: " A Commission is sent to the factory. The members of the Party are called up before them in front of the workers, both Party and non-Party. Each is required to tell his life's history, especially what he has done and is doing for the Revolution. Anyone can question him regarding both private and public matters, and after he has been turned inside out, the Commission then makes its decision.

> I remarked that this system made a spy of every man on his neighbour, and my companion again admitted that it was the duty of every worker to keep an eye on the actions and words of his fellows, and to report anything which seemed to be hostile to the interests of the working class (*I Search for Truth in Russia*, p. 255).

Citrine's horror at the idea that all workers should keep an eye on the members of the Party—which professes to be their organised vanguard—is understandable. What would happen to the British Labour Movement if every member had, every three or four years, to justify in public meetings his worthiness for membership of the Movement?

And, suppose that such a procedure was introduced. Would the workers then consider such a Party unworthy to represent them, and would they consider that to have this Party in power would be undemocratic? Or, on the contrary, would they not consider that such a Party of their best representatives would guarantee to them real democracy whereas every other party, representing the interests of exploiting minorities in the population, would be likely to destroy that real democracy?

VII.

The New Soviet Constitution is not a departure from the old, it is a development of it. In the words of Molotov at the Congress, " the new Constitution follows the path of the further democratisation of the Soviet order. It might be said that it completes the democratisation of the U.S.S.R. and, by widening its base, it also perfects the state forms consolidating in our country the dictatorship of the working class. . . . .

" The new Soviet Constitution dispenses with the remnants of restrictions contained in the Soviet Constitution of the first period when the influence of the exploiting classes over the toilers, especially in the countryside, was still widespread and the soviets were not yet sufficiently strong." This development of the Soviet Constitution was foreseen by Lenin in

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1919, and is based on the victory of Socialism, and the elimination of the employing classes from Soviet life. The new Constitution sums up the achievements of 19 years of the Revolution ; but it is not the last word in Soviet Constitutions ; it is the first word in Socialist Constitutions.

But Socialism is just the first stage of Communism. The means of production are now socially owned, and production is for use and not for profit. Anarchy of production and unemployment have been wiped out. But everything must be done to develop the forces of production to the maximum possible extent. Therefore, every worker receives according to his work.

The developments of to-day will lead to the higher phase of Communist Society to-morrow. When, as Marx says :

> The distinction between manual and intellectual work has disappeared after labour has become not merely a means to live, but is itself the first necessity of living, after the powers of production have also increased and all the springs of co-operative wealth are gushing more freely together with the all-round development of the individual, then and then only can the narrow bourgeois horizon of rights be left far behind and society will inscribe on its banner : " From each according to his capacity, to each according to his need " (*Critique of Gotha Programme*).

Marx wrote this in 1875. In his speech to the Congress of Soviets, Molotov says :

> We have achieved only the first, the lowest phase of Communism. Even this first phase of Communism, Socialism, is still far from having been completed ; we have built it up only in rough outline.
>
> We have abolished in our country the parasitic classes, that is, all and sundry capitalists, big and small. Thanks to this, exploitation of man by man has been done away with. This is a tremendous step forward, not only in the life of the peoples of our country, but on the road of emancipation of the whole of mankind.

Referring to the development towards Communism, Molotov says :

" We cannot fail to see that this is a long road. We cannot fail to see also that the solution of this task depends on how successfully we realise, in the words of Comrade Stalin, the ' state direction of society (dictatorship),' which ' belongs to the working class, as the advanced class of society.' " The new Constitution simply sums up the achievements already gained. " But is it not a fact," says Molotov, " that even this has proved to be sufficient greatly to widen our Socialist horizon and to give wings, as it were, to millions upon millions of simple folk who have made the new Constitution into a fighting banner of the further struggle for the cause of Communism ? "

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SHAPURJI SAKLATVALA

1874-1936

By Wm. GALLACHER, M.P.

A YEAR ago—on January 16, 1936—the British and Indian Labour movements lost one of whom each had equal cause to be proud—Shapurji Saklatvala.

Saklatvala held a unique position in the hearts of all who toil in Britain and in India. In the cause of Indian liberation and the emancipation of the working-class he was untiring. He was only 62 when he died—prematurely burned out by a life of incomparable devotion and service.

Sak was born in the purple. His mother was a Tata, the sister of the founder of the great Indian firm of that name—India's greatest industrial undertaking. In his early days he worked for the family firm and it appeared that his future would be that of the millionaire business man. But that was not Sak's idea at all. From his earliest days he espoused the cause of Indian freedom, and with such vigour that the British authorities suggested to Tata's that a change of climate would be good for him.

So to London he was sent in 1905, a fierce young Radical, to work in the London office of the firm. His family made him a member of the National Liberal Club—what better place to tame him? All went well for a week or so until Sak met Lord Morley—"Honest John"—a professed friend of India. Sak met the great man with enthusiasm, but was horrified when he found that his idea of friendship was to keep India tied to the imperialist chariot. For hours the verbal combat waged, and it ended with Sak banging the club doors behind it, never to enter them again except many years later as a visitor.

Sak found quickly that it was only in the Labour movement that he could realise his aspiration of working for Indian freedom and so, when he had only been a few months in England, he joined the Independent Labour Party. Here he continued to work, always on the Left, until the Russian Revolution which inspired him to redoubled energy. Inside the I.L.P. Sak worked to win that Party for Communism and the Third International. After the Southport Conference in 1920 turned down affiliation to the Third by the typically devious MacDonald manœuvre of forming the Vienna International Committee, Sak left the I.L.P. at the head of a group of determined revolutionaries.

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Into the Communist Party he came and here his tremendous energies and great capacity were quickly realised.

Whilst everyone recognised Sak's energy, his loyalty and his wonderful oratorical powers, there was a tendency to think that these summed up all his qualities. But there was much more to the man than that. Allied to these great qualities were a quick-moving brain, a subtle intelligence and a tremendous fund of knowledge on all sorts of subjects.

On many a subject he differed strongly from the majority of his comrades—all views held by Shapurji Saklatvala were strongly held. He would argue by the hour, by the day, by the week, for his point of view. But once a decision was taken, Sak would carry it out, be the consequences what they may.

In 1922 he was elected to Parliament as Labour member for Battersea North, more than doubling the Labour vote at the previous election. In 1923 he lost the seat, although his vote went still higher, owing to the uniting of Liberal-Tory strength in the constituency. In 1924 Sak was back again in the House, but this time the Labour Whip was withdrawn from him.

In Parliament he waged an uncompromising fight for working-class principles, and for the freedom of all colonial peoples. When the General Strike came in 1926, the ruling class showed in what respect they held Saklatvala. On May 2 he was arrested—the first of all the thousands of General Strike arrests, and charged in connection with a speech he had made in Hyde Park on May Day. The Bow Street magistrate wanted to bind him over. Sak refused to be bound over. "In circumstances such as those existing to-day," he told the court, "I shall refuse to be silenced except by *force majeure*."

So to jail he went. But even in jail Sak couldn't be silenced. Hardly a day passed but he managed to smuggle out of jail messages of encouragement to the miners, advice for the conduct of the struggle and so forth.

His imprisonment finished his connections with the firm of Tata. For long they had been trying to shut his mouth as a price of maintaining his job as manager of the London buying department for textile machinery. But Sak refused to be bought by Tata's—years before he had refused to hold a pennyworth of stock in the family concern, to be anything more than a salaried employee.

For a year previously, emissaries of the Labour Party had been pointing out to him the political career awaiting him if he dropped the Communist Party and became just a Labour man. Under-Secretary for India in the next Labour administration was the least inducement that was offered

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him. But neither place nor wealth could shift him from his granite loyalty.

In 1927 Sak went to India, and from one end of the country to the other his tour was a triumphal progress, so much so that, when he returned to England, the Government refused him permission ever to visit his homeland again, a decision which, to its eternal shame, the 1929 Labour Government upheld.

After Sak lost his Parliamentary seat in 1929 it meant no diminution in his strenuous political exertions. Up and down the country he went, doing propaganda meetings—there was no more popular speaker in Britain, writing innumerable articles for the British and Indian press, waging a battle against all those who would sell the pass.

In 1934 Sak paid a third visit to the Soviet Union, travelling extensively in Soviet Asia. And how his experiences thrilled him. He saw what it was possible to make of Asia and Asiatic peoples under Socialism and contrasted it with the squalor and illiteracy of his native India under British rule.

Sak's loyalty to the Communist Party and the working-class movement was never better illustrated than in the last General Election when—having withdrawn from Battersea in the cause of unity, he used up every ounce of his invincible energy in Rhondda and West Fife, working for my return and that of Harry Pollitt.

I have never seen more unfeigned joy than Sak's when he knew that our Party had won a victory in West Fife. At the victory meeting held in Shoreditch Town Hall when I came to London for the opening of Parliament, Sak made a speech which I shall never forget. It was a fine, ungrudging tribute to the Party, an expression of joy that we had once more got a voice in Parliament.

Shapurji Saklatvala was a truly great man, whose tremendous abilities would have made him an enormous asset to the Socialist Britain and to the free India which he never lived to see.

It is customary to speak well of the dead. But no words of praise spoken about Saklatvala could exaggerate his tremendous qualities.

Sak died in harness a year ago, but his memory lives on and the work which he did is being carried on and is bearing fruit. Those of us who are carrying on can feel proud if we win the same confidence and trust that all who knew him placed in Sak.

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SELECTED LETTERS

By V. I. LENIN

[*Hitherto there has been no collection of the letters of Lenin published in the English language, apart from those political letters which have been included in the volumes so far issued of the English editions of the collected works and selections of Lenin. In view of the thirteenth anniversary of Lenin's death occurring this month, the* LABOUR MONTHLY *has decided to commence the publication of the present series, of which this is the first instalment. They have been chosen from Volume XXIX. of the 3rd Russian Edition* (1934) *of the Collected Works. They consist of various letters written in the period* 1911-1922. *Practically all of them have been published before in various papers in the Soviet Union since the Revolution, but it will be seen that in almost every case they have been printed in this Volume from the original manuscript or from the copy found in the Tsarist Police Archives. The letters chosen deal, especially in the first few which this instalment comprises, with the questions of the press and the Duma elections and Lenin's attitude to them. They have been specially translated and annotated for the* LABOUR MONTHLY.]

No. 35.

To the Editorial Board of *Zvyezda*[1] in Petersburg
(22 April, 1912. Paris.)

Dear Colleague,

I am sending you to-day some new material for the *Sputnik Izbiratelya.*[2] This makes almost everything ; in two days you will also get two short articles, and then from Tver an article on the budget.

1. I also strongly advise the reprinting from *Zvyezda* No. 34, 17 December, 1911, of Frey's[3] article on "The Rôle of Working-Class Voters in the Electoral Campaign"[4]. His article from No. 36 (31 December, 1911), on the rôle of peasant voters might also well be reprinted. Don't be too eager to cut the articles much. It is better to print in full a big thing that is going to be useful in giving a clear lead in the elections.

[1]All explanatory notes will be found at the conclusion.

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Don't be put off by considerations of cost and space: it is better to print solid stuff.

If in the extreme case it is absolutely impossible to publish all the articles, be sure to return what you don't print.

2. Here it is urgently necessary to make arrangements for accurate exchange of correspondence. Get your secretary to write direct to me here, and not through Arcachon, to avoid delay. Give me also a somewhat better address for your letters.

3. It is wrong of you not to answer the liquidators. This is a big mistake. It can and must be done, without saying a word about the conference, by printing a short answer to each of *Zhivoe Delo's* lies, thus: *Zhivoe Delo* is lying in such and such a number, like all the liquidators. You must answer them, otherwise you lose.

4. If Plekhanov writes you must send his article here in proof. Otherwise the result will be a "privilege" for him which we cannot permit. Be careful. You will force us to withdraw if Plekhanov is accorded the privilege of writing against the conference when we cannot write in favour of it. This would be shameful—to let him criticise when we cannot praise.

5. Send me without fail in a separate packet, wrapped up in copies of *Novoe Vremya*, the following numbers of *Zvyezda*: 24 and 25 of 1911, 18 (54), 19 (55), 22 (58) and 23 (59)—we haven't them—and Nos. 11 and 26 of *Zhivoe Delo*. Please send separately the confiscated numbers, wrapped up among papers of the Right.

6. Inform me at once about the daily paper[5]. What format will it have? What size articles can one send?

7. Try to buy as cheaply as possible the stenographic reports of the Third Duma, particularly sessions 1911-12. Write.

First printed in 1924 in the book, *The "Zvyezda" and "Pravda" Period*, 1911-14, Part III.

Printed from a copy preserved in the files of the Department of Police, entry No. 1452 of 12 April, 1912[6].

No. 36.

To the Editorial Board of *Pravda*[7] in Petersburg (8 September, 1912. Cracow).

Honoured Colleague,

You remind me again about the address of our acquaintance. You asked me for it before and I sent it to you. I wrote it—I remember it well—at the very end of a certain long letter. Make enquiries, if you can. However, it is easier to repeat the address. Here it is: Herr Kurt Lauschner, Beuthen (Ober-Schlesien), Piekarerstr. 19/III, Germany. Inside you have to add: For Mr. Hörsing (für Herrn Hörsing).

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(There are two towns in Germany called Beuthen, so you must put "Ober-Schlesien") . . . I received. Many thanks. Dansky's manuscript has also come. I was awfully surprised to receive to-day from you the copies of *Pravda* and a collection of the black papers, but not Thursday's *Nevsky Golos*. For important reasons, it is extremely necessary that I should get at once copies of *Nevsky Golos* as they come out. If it wasn't published, please take the trouble to drop me a line about it immediately. It is extremely important for me to know, as soon as possible, whether it was published on Thursday, 28 August (as was promised in *Nevsky Golos* of 17 August), and if so, to receive a copy. By the way, I sent you long ago a list of the numbers missing from my files of *Zvyezda*, *Nevskaya Zvyezda*, *Pravda* and *Delo*. You still have not let me know whether you can send them. But, in the meantime, a mutual acquaintance of ours informed me the other day that you have sets of *Zvyezda* and *Nevskaya Zvyezda*. Please let me know whether you kept the list I sent and whether you can send the missing numbers. I take this opportunity of complimenting Comrade Vitimsky (I hope it won't trouble you to hand over this letter to him) on his remarkably able article in the copy of *Pravda* which I received to-day (No. 98). It is an extraordinarily apposite subject, excellently worked out by him in a way that is short but clear. In general, you will do well from time to time in *Pravda* to recall, quote from, and comment upon, Shchedrin[8] and other writers of the "old" Narodnik democracy. For the readers of *Pravda*—for 25,000 people—this would be appropriate and interesting; and it would shed light upon contemporary questions of working-class democracy from a different angle and in another hue.

What is the circulation of *Pravda?* Don't you think it would be useful to have monthly statistics, if only in brief (numbers printed, names of the town and district)? Could there be any reasons for not publishing these statistics? If there aren't important objections, then, it seems to me, they should be published.

I almost forgot. We have received a series of complaints from various places abroad that *Pravda* has not been reaching either subscribers or persons who have paid for particular issues. I am not receiving it regularly at present. It undoubtedly means that something is wrong with the mailing arrangements. Please take most energetic measures. Look through the letters from abroad concerning subscriptions and get to the bottom of it. Send one copy each of *Pravda* and *Nevskaya Zvyezda* to the following: Frl. Slutzky: Katherinenstr. "8 g." H.II (bei Worte), Halensee, Berlin.

First printed in 1924 in *Krasnaya Letopis*, No. 1 (10).

Printed from a copy preserved in the files of the Department of Police, entry No. 2958 of 28 August, 1912.

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No. 37.

To the Editorial Board of *Pravda* in Petersburg
(2 November, 1912. Cracow.)

Honoured Colleague,

To-day I have been reading in *Pravda* and in *Luch* of the results of the elections to the workers' electoral colleges in Petersburg[9]. I cannot help congratulating you on the leading article[10] in No. 146: in a moment of defeat—a defeat which was not inflicted by the social democrats (from an analysis of the figures it is clear that the success of the liquidators was not due to the social democrats)—the editorial board has at once given a correct, firm and admirable lead in showing the importance of taking a stand on principle, protesting against "the humiliation." Don't misunderstand these lines. Don't think that they are caused by anything other than the desire, so natural for a permanent collaborator, to share my thoughts with you. The moment was a difficult one, and the struggle hard. Almost everything possible was done, but an obvious disintegration had set in, and the non-party people gave their votes to the opportunists. To counteract this disintegration, it is the more necessary for persistent and obstinate work, based strictly on sound doctrine, to be carried out by a closely-knit body (a compact editorial board, for example, or group of collaborators, etc.).

It is most important not to stop, but to carry on the work, begun by *Pravda*, of studying the elections. To collect and publish the votes of all the candidates (you have only got 9 and 13[11]. To carry out and publish an enquiry as to how the non-party people voted, how the Putilov workers voted (7 and 2 liquidators), how the Semyannikov workers voted (2 and 1 liquidator), and so on, factory by factory.

Only *Pravda* can successfully carry out this important task.

Greetings and best wishes.

Yours, LENIN.

First printed in 1924 in the book, *The "Zvyezda" and "Pravda" Period*, 1911-14, Part III.

Printed from a copy preserved in the files of the Department of Police, entry No. 4315, 23 October, 1912.

No. 38.

To the Editorial Board of *Pravda* in Petersburg
(26 November, 1912. Cracow).

Dear Colleague,

We are sending you the Petersburg instruction[12], which came into our hands by chance, owing to a fortunate opportunity from Petersburg. Do not fail to publish this instruction to the Petersburg deputy in a prominent place in big type. It is perfectly impermissible that *Luch*[13]

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should already be speaking about the instruction, distorting it, and publishing comments on it, while *Pravda*, whose supporters drew up the instruction, carried it out and put it into circulation, is silent. . . . What a situation ! How can a workers' paper possibly exist if it takes up such a disdainful attitude to things which interest the workers ? (It goes without saying that, in case single expressions and phrases cannot be used owing to the censorship, changes can be made in places, as is usual in such cases). But not to publish such material means, not only laying the basis for hundreds of conflicts in which *Pravda* will appear to be at fault, but also endangering in the highest degree the purely newspaper side of the paper, its circulation and standing as an enterprise. For a newspaper simply isn't just a thing that a reader reads and a writer writes. It must itself look out for certain material, find it betimes and publish it at the right moment. A paper must look for and find the connections necessary to it. And here suddenly there is an instruction to the Petersburg deputy issued by *Pravda's* supporters, and it isn't in *Pravda*. . . . Please answer immediately on receipt of this letter.

First printed in 1924 in the book, *The "Zvyezda" and "Pravda" Period*, 1911-14, Part III.

Printed from a copy preserved in the files of the Department of Police, entry No. 4545 of 13 November, 1912.

(*To be continued.*)

NOTES.

1. *Zvyezda.* Ran, with interruptions, from 16 December, 1910, to 22 April, 1912, at first as a weekly, afterwards more frequently. At first was the joint organ of Mensheviks and Bolsheviks, but came completely under Bolshevik control.

2. A temporary election guide for the Duma Election.

3. Frey. A Lenin pseudonym.

4. Electoral Campaign. To the 4th Duma, 1912.

5. The projected publication of *Pravda.*

6. The discrepancy between the date of the letter and that under which it was entered in the police files is due to the fact that Lenin, writing from abroad, used the Western calendar, which was 13 days in advance of the calendar used in Tsarist Russia.

7. *Pravda.* Ran from 22 April, 1912, until 8 July, 1914, as a daily, despite frequent confiscations, suppressions and changes of name, printer, etc. Began as joint organ of Bolsheviks and the Plekhanov Mensheviks, but quickly became purely a Bolshevik working-class daily.

8. Shchedrin. M. E. Saltykov, 1826-1889, wrote telling, clever, satirical stories exposing the corruption and incompetence of the Tsarist régime and its officials, in allegorical form.

9. Workers' Electoral Colleges. The system of elections to the Duma was very complex. The workers, peasants, town dwellers other than workmen, and landowners were each in a separate group for electoral purposes. Election was not direct to the Duma, but, in the case of the workers, was conducted in

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three stages. The workers in each factory or works elected their plenipotentiaries, the plenipotentiaries from all the factories and works in the province met in a general meeting and elected the workers' list (workers' electoral colleges). From this list the landowners' and bourgeois groups selected one man as deputy to the Duma. The electoral law laid down the total number of workers' deputies as six, representing six European-Russian industrial areas. In order to defeat the law placing the right of final election in the hands of the landowners, the plenipotentiaries of all the six areas insisted on all except one of the workers' list withdrawing their candidature, so leaving the landowners with no choice but to elect the worker chosen by the plenipotentiaries. In all six areas Bolshevik party members were elected to the Duma.

The social-democratic fraction in the Duma at first consisted of 12 members—six Bolsheviks, submitting to the direction of the Bolshevik Party, and six others all connected with the "August bloc" of Mensheviks, Trotskyists, and others, to whom the Bolsheviks gave the name of "liquidators." Coming together as a Duma fraction for political reasons, the twelve were thus divided into two equal camps.

10. This article, "Who won?" was written by Stalin. The defeat Lenin refers to arose from the fact that in the Petersburg province the elections to the "workers' electoral colleges," which resulted in a majority for the Bolsheviks, were annulled by the government, and at the second election three bolsheviks and three liquidators were elected. As the six could not agree on one candidate for deputy the landowners were left with the final selection. But, as it happened, they chose a young worker, Badayev, who was a Bolshevik.

11. Lenin here refers to the votes of two provinces, apparently.

12. "Instruction to the Petersburg Deputy." An article written by Stalin on the tasks of the workers' deputy to the Duma.

13. *Luch.* The organ of the "August bloc" of Mensheviks, etc.

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BOOK REVIEW

SPAIN ON OUR DOORSTEP.

Spain in Revolt. By Harry Gannes and Theodore Repard. (Gollancz.) 287 pp. Map. (A Left Book Club Choice.)

Spanish Front. By Carlos Prieto. (Nelson.) 2s. 6d. 95 pp. Map. 2s. 6d.

Behind the Spanish Barricades. By John Langdon-Davies. (Secker and Warburg.) 303 pp. 55 ill. 12s. 6d.

"Rain, rain, go to Spain."

THE capacity to ignore whatever is across the horizon is a crippling weakness of mankind. To the proverbial capacity of man to eat his dinner with a good digestion so long as the starving beggar is kicked out of sight should be added the capacity of people, nowadays, to eat, sleep, work (when they be so lucky) while they only *read* about Spain in the papers. The fact that the nursery rhyme set at the head of this review has ceased to be a selfish, chauvinistic evasion of our proper share of bad weather and has become a prayer vital to the safety of millions of women and children is not sufficiently appreciated. The fact that to wake in the morning and see sunshine, instead of producing a feeling of exhilaration, implies, for millions of our fellow-beings, the sickening certainty that in a few hours death and destruction will come raining from above, since the ground will have dried sufficiently to let laden bombers get off the ground—this fact is a measure of the degree to which that return to barbarism predicted by Marx as the inevitable consequence of capitalist development is actually, to-day even if over the horizon, being realised.

That this barbaric destruction is the consequence, not of any imagined " extremist-Fascist-anti-Communism " maintaining " order " against possibly unnecessarily hasty " Red extremism "—the favourite bogy of Social Democracy against all left advance—this is the theme of all these books. We are in the presence of a classic specimen case of the progressive parties gaining power peacefully, constitutionally and democratically, according to the model approved by Transport House and the method alleged by revisers of Marx to have been said by him to be possible in England. We are nakedly in the presence of the consequence, equally foretold by Marx, but always cut out of the quotations by the revisionists: the pro-slavery rebellion.

It is even terrifying to contemplate the capacity of the reaction in Great Britain to cover the openness of the reaction in Spain by such terms as " National " and " anti-red " when we consider the history of the agricultural question in Spain. Labourers at 9d. a day, vast uncultivated estates owned by absentee landlords, agricultural reform acts allowed to remain a dead letter, the Robles-supported Government tearing up and destroying crops grown by labourers who—not against the law, but in accordance with their legal rights illegally delayed—had made use of uncultivated land, and Franco's declaration of policy to Jay Allen.

> Allen: " Agrarian reform ? "
> Franco: " No use in giving poor land to poor peasants. It is not land alone that counts, but money to work it. Another 25 years will see the natural break-up of the big estates into small properties and the creation of a bourgeois peasantry." (Quoted in *Spain in Revolt*, p. 164.)

Another 25 years ! Another 25 years—six years longer than has been required for the growth under socialism of unexampled prosperity—of life

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in a room ten feet by ten feet shared by three married couples (*Behind the Spanish Barricades*, p. 39)—this is the prospect that the " liberator of Spain " proposes with equanimity. Truly—the headlong pace of capitalist disintegration has outrun Fascism itself. There is no longer time for the demagogy that built mass movements and misled even sincere anti-Fascists into nonsense about the " Socialism of the middle-class." Reaction becomes naked, and International Fascism in supporting it betrays its character. British conservatism, in striving to veil it anew, reveals its own menace, its perfect lack of reluctance, whenever necessary, to use in its own interest the same weapons.

Each of these books, usefully in its very different way, drives home this fundamental and frantically urgent lesson. The facts, in whatever aspect, cannot escape so doing. Each book has defects, but together they are complementary. " Spanish Front " is an admirable short summary from the liberal point of view. It is quite devoid of any explanation of the Spanish working-class movement and its special forms. It narrates events rather as a succession than as an interrelated nexus, but within its tiny limits it gives a very clearly set-out account of the Spanish background from early historical times to the rebellion and autumn. From it the case for Spanish democracy emerges irresistibly in a shape highly suitable to the non-political Britisher who is not a " heavy reader."

The second book, by Gannes and Repard, two American left-wing journalists, is another invaluable Left Book Club choice. It bears marks of considerable haste, the story does not emerge so clearly as it does from Prieto's book, but on the other hand it is a much profounder and completer story. The historical opening is more perfunctory, but from no other source is at present obtainable so documented an account of the period immediately preceding the rebellion and attending its early stages. The outstanding section of the book is its second part, containing chapters on the peasantry, the church, the fantastic army (one officer to six men, more than 800 generals), federal separatism and the labour movement. This is very well dossiered and full of ammunition. If it does not overlook causes, like Prieto, it does to some extent, however, slide over facts. And it is very wrong in such a book for the authors totally to ignore the voting figures in the February election. In the February elections the popular front obtained less votes than the reaction, although many more seats.

The way these three books treat this circumstance is indicative. Langdon-Davies discusses it fully, pointing out (*a*) that the result was constitutional ; (*b*) that no Labour Government in England had a majority of votes but, to English people, this was no justification for rebellion (a weak point, this, the Pound crisis was at least an equivalent to rebellion) ; (*c*) that the elections were held by the Right, so at any rate there can be no suspicion about the Left votes that *were* counted ; (*d*) and this is crucial, that, whatever the alignment of parties at the election, the parties that have since adhered to the government following the rebellion (including, for example, the Basques) total a great majority of the votes and much more than the reaction. Prieto mentions the voting figures without discussion beyond (*a*). Gannes and Repard do not mention them at all. When much play is being made with these figures by anti-democratic conservatism, it is a sin not to analyse them. Taking it all in all, however, Gannes and Repard, if as outsiders they know less *what* is happening in Spain, from their Marxist training know and provide us with very much better explanation of *why* it is happening.

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Langdon-Davies' book (whose sin is its price) is typical of the man whose conscientious sincerity has made him one of the most indefatigable of Anti-Fascist speakers on Spain throughout the last months. A sentimental modern Englishman, he courses through Spain (which he knows thoroughly) describing scenes in its streets, the incidents of its every day, and, above all, the individuals he meets. The whole while he earnestly and persuasively endeavours, with all the arts his experience as a publicist has given him, to shake the bourgeois reader into experiencing himself the same emotions of sympathy that these folk evoked in his own broadly humane heart.

The instance we have cited above exemplifies his thoroughness. There are most moving concluding passages designed to shame the Englishman, proud of the nineteenth century tradition of Byron and Shelley but inactive to-day, and a particularly valuable chapter on the church, for it is perhaps more important—from the point of view of countering Franco's propaganda in this country—to make the Britisher, both worker and bourgeois, understand the nature of the Spanish church than any other single factor in the Spanish situation. It is easy to under-estimate the value of such an anecdotage as Langdon-Davies' book, for the readers who read it only would of course be quite deprived of the perspective he could obtain even from such a handbook as Prieto's, but as a supplement it is most important.

The publishers have drawn attention to the fact that an advertisement for Langdon-Davies' book was refused by *The Observer* on the frivolous grounds of alleged "extreme character," though in the precise form in which it was accepted by the *Sunday Times*, *Spectator*, and other journals. Is it not of even more concern to the working-class movement that, to the date of writing, one month after publication, no review of this book so persuasive for anti-Fascism has appeared in the *Daily Herald?*

I. M.

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED.

Life Here and Now. Arthur Ponsonby. (Allen and Unwin.) 289 pp. 10s. 6d.

A Short History of the Future. John Langdon Davies. (Routledge.) 272 pp. 10s. 6d.

Transition : No. 25. Fall, 1936. (Faber and Faber.) 216 pp. 3s.

The Government in Britain. Richard Bailey, B.Sc. (Pitman.) 141 pp. 2s. 6d.

Ideology and Utopia. Louis Wirth. (Karl Mannheim.) 318 pp. 15s. 6d.

Soviet Communism : Dictatorship or Democracy ? Is Soviet Communsism a new Civilisation ? Both by Sidney and Beatrice Webb. Left Review Pamphlets. 32 pp. and 30 pp. 3d. each.

The Theory and Practice of Socialism. John Strachey. (Gollancz.) 488 pp. 10s. 6d.

The King Sees Red. Anthony Bertram. (Chapman & Hall Ltd.) 358 pp. 7s. 6d.

Life and Death Struggle of a National Minority. (The Jugoslavs in Italy.) Dr. Lavo Cermelj. Jugoslav Union of League of Nations Societies.

Spain's Democracy : Talks to America. Harry F. Ward and A. A. McLeod. 18 pp. 2d. *The American Legion and Civil Liberty.* Walter Wilson. 32 pp. 3d. *Hearst : Counterfeit American.* Ann Weedon. 24 pp. 2d. (American League Against War and Fascism, N.Y., U.S.A.)

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The Financial Position

WE commence a New Year with contributions to our Editorial columns from wide and wider circles, in accordance with the broadening of the whole Movement, itself reflected in our rising circulation, but the Debt and Guarantee Funds are still only being faithfully supported by a very narrow circle of our friends. We know that they cannot carry on for ever. We thank them for all their most generous response, but we would appeal to the hundreds of our new readers, if they appreciate the editorial columns, to search their pockets and see what they can manage and so enable them to continue their profit and enjoyment of the MONTHLY'S contents.

For we are indeed sure that these Contents are appreciated. One reader, for instance, in ordering back volumes, declares:

> I find your paper more and more indispensable. I cannot understand why your circulation is not at least 30,000. It ought to be. I'm sure it will be one day.

Such confidence in all our readers is what we want. But to get this 30,000 we must have more funds. We are hampered by the still existing over £250 of debt and the gap between the monthly Guarantee Fund of £18 odd and the monthly deficit of £22.

For in order to increase our circulation we need to launch out on a wide advertising and publicity campaign—and funds for such a campaign are lacking. If there are readers who would prefer that we allot their donation to such a fund to start such a campaign, rather than for it to be used simply to pay off the debt, we would certainly agree.

It is to be hoped, therefore, that all readers will seriously consider sending the LABOUR MONTHLY a New Year's Gift for whatever purpose they prefer—Debt, Guarantee or Advertising—so that we may soon pass the first stage—10,000—in the objective of a 30,000 circulation.

Therefore do not hesitate, but fill in the form overleaf and forward it to the LABOUR MONTHLY immediately with your contribution.

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	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.
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Vera Keen, Lynton, Devon	0	5	0	John James, S. Wales ..	0	1	0
Warren, Surrey ..	0	2	6	London Water Works, E.C.	0	5	5
Bancroft Clark ..	0	6	0	Proceeds from Sales, per F.W.B.	0	11	9
S.	0	0	6	James Gray	0	13	0
J., Murton, Hants. ..	0	13	0	U.L. Group, London	1	0	0
Prescot, Lancs. ..	2	0	0				
G. Ramsay, Durham ..	0	2	6				
Carried forward ..	91	9	5		£94	0	7

GUARANTEE FUND.

	£	s.	d.
Previously acknowledged	18	9	7

In addition, 1s. has been received for the Guarantee Fund from "Mr. and Mrs. Tom Paine."

To the Manager, THE LABOUR MONTHLY, 7 John Street, London, W.C.1.

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